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ON
EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY,
&c.

TWENTY DISCOURSES

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

IN THE YEAR 1820,

AT

THE LECTURE

FOUNDED BY THE REV. JOHN HULSE, M.A.

By *Handwritten: C. Benson*
C. BENSON, M.A.

MASTER OF THE TEMPLE AND PREBENDARY OF WORCESTER.

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TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE EARL OF LIVERPOOL, K. G.

FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, &c. &c.

MY LORD ;

I venture to take this public and early opportunity of acknowledging, with great gratitude, the obligations which I owe to your Lordship's unsolicited kindness. I feel it an honourable distinction to be ranked among the number of those Clergymen whom, with a single view to the welfare of Religion and the Established Church, you have been pleased so frequently to recommend to the Royal Favour. Instances of such disinterested Patronage are, however, no longer a matter of surprise, though they never can cease to be a subject of admiration and praise. Your Lordship's life has, indeed, been devoted to the public service ; and during that life, the exertion of your power, and the influence of your example, have been

so continually directed, not only to the political, but also to the moral and religious welfare of the Nation, that they have deservedly secured for your person and administration, both the confidence and the affections of the country—both the voice and the heart of the people.

My Lord, to promote what I believe to be one of the first of your Lordship's wishes—to promote the practice and principles of the Christian Religion in that Church to which I have the privilege to belong, will, I trust, be my constant endeavour. And that Providence may continue your valuable life, in health, and strength, and honour, for the public benefit and your own individual and increasing happiness, will ever be the earnest prayer of

Your Lordship's

Most obliged, and

Very obedient, humble Servant,

C. BENSON.

Feb. 22, 1826.

PREFACE.

THE origin and reason of the present publication are so fully detailed in the first and second Discourses, that I deem it unnecessary to make any further extracts from Mr. HULSE's Will. In future years it may be incumbent on the Lecturer to do so ; but at present it is only requisite to state why this is the first series of Discourses which has ever been either preached or published in pursuance of Mr. Hulse's bequests, although he died so long ago as 1789. One principal reason, among many others, I believe to have been this, that the proceeds of his estates were not at an earlier period sufficient to repay the Preacher for the expense of printing, much less to remunerate him for the anxious labour of composing twenty Discourses fit to be delivered before

such an audience, and afterwards submitted to the criticisms of the world. Even at present the whole emoluments of the office are nearly absorbed by the printer's bills, and little is left to the Lecturer, but the consciousness of labouring in an honourable appointment, and, if not successfully, at least in a good and holy cause.

The Volume now laid before the Public may be divided into three parts.

1. The first two Discourses are merely introductory, and were printed some time ago, for the reasons specified in the Appendix. They consist of a few preliminary remarks, and a slight sketch of the life and bequests of Mr. Hulse (in the first); and of a more lengthened detail and examination of the duties of the Hulsean Lecturer or Christian Preacher (in the second Discourse).

2. The eleven following Discourses, from the third to the thirteenth, inclusive,

are occupied with considerations upon the Evidences of Christianity. This is the first subject pointed out by Mr. Hulse to the attention of the preacher, and neither "the signs of the times," nor the order of religious inquiries seemed to admit of such a subject being forgotten at the present moment. In treating a question so often and ably investigated, it has been my object to systematize, what we may call the Evangelical Demonstration, and to arrange its parts so as to give them their proper application, and their greatest force. The works of most writers either mistake, or do not point out at all, what is the peculiar office of each branch of evidence. Even the work of Paley (I mention it because so much and deservedly studied) establishes the credibility of the Messengers, rather than estimates the sufficiency of their testimony, and speaks only in general terms of the argument from miracles, the argument from prophecy, and that from the internal frame and constitution of the Gospel, without marking how far and to

what portions of the whole truth of Christianity, each of these arguments may be more directly applied.

Whether I have succeeded in supplying the defect, I must leave with the reader to determine, contenting myself with endeavouring to diminish for him the labour of forming a judgment, by observing that the connected chain of positive evidences is contained in the *third, fifth, seventh*, and concluding part (from p. 223) of the *ninth* Discourse. In the passage last mentioned, I have attempted to give a brief summary of the mode of arguing, and of its application and power. The remaining Discourses of this second part of the series are employed in meeting objections, and considering some of the collateral arguments in favour of Christianity.—To these, of course, those only who feel—or who feel a wish to know—the force of the Sceptic's reasonings for infidelity, or suspense of faith, will turn. To the *heart*, it is not in general a benefi-

cial labour thus to contend in sophistry with an adversary, whatever it may be to the understanding. The feelings of charity are never improved by struggling for, even when you obtain, a mental victory.

3. The last seven Discourses are altogether practical, yet not altogether without method. I have endeavoured to lay down the general mode of attaining salvation (Disc. xiv.); the moral (Disc. xv.) and the religious duties of a Christian (Disc. xvi. xvii. xviii.); the means of the reconciliation of sinners to God, and the grounds of their acceptableness with him (Disc. xix.); and, lastly (Disc. xx.) the consequences of our present actions, as they will influence our future and eternal destiny. These Discourses are not, in general, upon difficult texts of Scripture, as Mr. Hulse seems to require, but they are certainly upon such as are "generally useful, and necessary to be explained;" and as they were delivered during the vacation, when few who would

have relished the thorny discussion of a disputed point, or doubtful meaning, were present, I trust I shall stand excused. I add further (speaking to those alone who *heard* the series) that the Discourses are not printed in the exact order in which they were preached. In fact, the *twelfth* Discourse was the last delivered; which I notice to account for the valedictory nature of its concluding paragraph.

C. BENSON.

MAGD. COLL. CAMB.

Dec. 20, 1820.

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HULSEAN LECTURES,

1820.

DISCOURSE I.

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“ The memory of the Just is blessed.”

I AM a believer in God, and in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. This is the substance of my faith, the rock of my consolation, and my only hope, whether in time or eternity, for the attainment of that peace and happiness, which must be the ultimate desire of every being who has the power to think, or the capacity to form a wish, upon the subject of his own future destiny. That the kindness of Providence has cast the lot of my inheritance in a Christian land; but more especially, that it has granted me to draw the first breath of life under the influence of the Gospel in her purest form, and in a country where she invi-

gorates the soul by the brightest beams of her unclouded excellence;—I look upon it as a great and unmerited blessing. I count it an equal mercy that, in days when the idol of unbelief had gathered round it the adoration of mankind, and a vain and earthly philosophy alone had power to scatter with unbounded profusion amongst her votaries, the senseless honours of human praise, there was yet piety enough in those to whom the formation of my early principles and the instruction of my maturer years were committed, to despise the idle applauses of the creature's tongue, and to refuse to burn the holy incense of their devotion before the unhallowed image which the madness of speculation had set up. It is necessary, indeed, but it is, at the same time, a very difficult duty, to glory in the shame of bowing before our Maker as the Lord of the Universe, at a moment when he is degraded or renounced by half the miserable worms that he has made. Nor is it a more easy task to cling with affection to our Redeemer in those seasons of infidelity, when his children do “hide, as it were, their faces from him,” and he is become again, as of old, the “despised and rejected of men.” I cannot, therefore, and I must not cease to thank the God of these my fathers for having preserved them pure in the midst of a general corruption, and for having been myself, through their instrumentality, so deeply imbued

with a conviction of the same comfortable truths, that I have never yet quite failed in faith, even under circumstances of the greatest danger ; but at all times been enabled, either to triumph when tempted, or to hope, believe, and rise again when fallen. Yet, whilst I thus confess the extent of that gratitude which I owe to the great Creator of all things for the blessings and benefits that are past, far be it from me, and from every one who professes to submit his understanding to the doctrines of the Gospel, to forget the frailty of our common nature. We cannot look into ourselves, without trembling at the consciousness of infirmity. We cannot contemplate the shifting scenes of the world, without an awful perception of the snares which are there so thickly sown to draw the souls of men into perdition ; and we cannot search the Scriptures, without remembering and musing upon the baseless confidence of Peter. Feeling therefore what I am, and fearing what I may be, I would turn my thoughts and my words up to the throne of grace, and, in the meek humility of an earnest prayer, beseech the Almighty Guardian of Spirits to preserve us all in the untainted profession of those principles in which we have been trained, to guide us by the light of the Gospel in the dangers and difficulties of life, and finally to grant that, after having reached, as others, the respective terms of our appointed pilgrimage, we

may be enabled to taste the unspeakable mercy of Christian consolations when we come to die.

I am a believer in God, and in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. I am more—I am a Minister of that Lord whom I adore, and a steward of those mysteries in which alone there is a hope for the salvation of a sinner's soul; and under this character I have become the subject of additional labours and increasing difficulties.

The common obligations of morality bind it as an indispensable duty upon the conscience of every man, to endeavour to glorify God and benefit his fellow-creatures by spreading, as far as it is in his power, the knowledge and the practice of true religion and holiness. To him, therefore, who regards the Gospel as the word of truth and the way of life, there must ever appear a necessity, whether he be in or out of the church, for so ordering the steps of his progress through the world, as to inspire the confidence of his own faith into the breasts of those who are his companions on the road. But to those who to these ordinary ties of nature and of feeling have added the peculiar obligations which result from solemn and deliberate choice; to those who, under the influence of a godly disposition, poured into their souls by the Spirit of the Almighty, have freely undertaken the

office of becoming ministers as well as subjects of the kingdom of their Lord, and teachers as well as disciples of his righteousness—the double chain which binds them to the service of subduing the rebellious, and maintaining the allegiance of the wavering Christian, is much too firmly riveted to be broken with any hope of impunity.—The priests of the temple have sought out the dangerous pre-eminence for themselves, and they must neither yield to the temptations, nor shrink from the difficulties, which its honour brings.—To preach the Gospel is a burthen which they have bound upon their own shoulders, to bear it for life is a task which they have assumed, and woe be unto them if they preach not the Gospel, both daily and duly, and in all their ways, and words, and works.

In describing this awful responsibility of the sacred office, I am but delineating a picture of the duties and the dangers which attach to my own situation. I too have entered into the temple of the Lord as a minister as well as a disciple, and receiving into my hands the awful, yet affectionate, charge of feeding the flock of Christ as a good shepherd, have consecrated my life to the service of my Redeemer at the altar, and given up my years, my strength, and my understanding to the holy vocation of becoming a spiritual guide to the weak, and a moral and religious guardian of the

wandering. I have entered into the field of God's spiritual harvest as a labourer, and labour I henceforth must to the end of my days, and at the peril of my soul. The vows I uttered were holy, and cannot be broken; are past, and beyond the power of recal. The faith in which I have been nurtured, therefore, I must teach it till I die; else should I here on earth be counted a burthen to society, become a mark for the finger of unbelieving scorn to point at, and grow into a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence for them that are ready to perish out of the way. Such are the melancholy consequences which flow from the idleness or evil of a servant of God, in this world and to others; whilst for himself he is working out at the same time, in the world to come, an eternal union with that wretched company of apostate angels who are described to us by Him whose word is truth, as trembling whilst they believe, and weeping with the wailings of despair at the consciousness of their own everlasting exclusion from the presence of God in glory.

If the general remarks in which I have hitherto ventured to indulge be true, it is evident that there is no choice left to the Ministers of God in the primary and principal exercise of their intellectual powers. The cause of the Christian Religion must be the business, as it is the interest, of

every Christian teacher ; and never can he be recommended consistently with the hopes of heaven and of salvation, to waste or to weaken his natural abilities by devoting them to pursuits unconnected with godliness. Yet as the ministry was ordained for the benefit of the whole body of the church of Christ, and as there is an abundant variety in the circumstances and wants of the mass of mankind, there may certainly be allowed to each individual a corresponding degree of discretion in selecting those particular religious objects towards which he may be pleased or called to give his faculties a more immediate and positive direction. Both the Christian ministry and the Christian world are composed of members having diversities of gifts, and requiring therefore a difference in the administration of those gifts. By the constitution of his mind, by his place in society, by the nature of his previous studies, by the sphere of his present operation, in a word, by the innumerable leadings and dispensations of Providence, every one may be enabled to judge with sufficient clearness and certainty for himself, of the opportunities with which he has been blessed for the edification of the Church ; and when once the manner in which his talents may be most usefully exerted has been found, it is his duty to obey the call with cheerfulness and diligence. The labours of a minister may doubtless be equally pleasing to God and

equally profitable to man, whether his life be spent in the education of youth, the instruction of a congregation, the privacy of sacred literature, the conversion of the heathen, or the public duties of the pastoral care ; and should the liberty of a free and independent choice be left to the dictates of his own mind, a minister may, perhaps with equal safety, select any one of these various modes of spiritual usefulness, provided only that his energies be faithfully employed and unremittingly exerted in spreading the practice of piety, and enforcing and illustrating those principles and doctrines which, in the sincerity of his heart, he really conceives to comprehend the essence of true religion. But there are some situations in which all such discretion with regard to the exercise of our faculties is taken away. Every office which man holds from the gift of his fellow-creatures, must be considered as a call upon him from heaven for good, and the nature of the duties which it requires are, from the moment in which he enters upon their discharge, and during the whole of the time in which he may continue in their execution, to form the rule and guide of his mental labours. Inclination or interest must never be yielded to in such instances, charm they never so wisely, if they would withdraw us into a different path from that which the finger of God has visibly pointed out to us as the way of usefulness and everlasting life.

Neither must we permit the timidity of our nature to shrink back, through the fear of a failure or the fascinations of ease, from the hardness of a task which we have the capacity to bear. In the decay and feebleness of advancing age, it may perhaps be wise and holy for the soul to interpose an interval of indolence between the confines of life and death, a certain brief and melancholy pause in activity for recollection and preparation for the grave. But, in the vigorous maturity of manly years, no one who hopes hereafter to be glorified with angels, and received amongst the inhabitants of the higher mansions of heaven, can safely deviate into any other course of duties than those which the finger of an over-ruling Providence has opened to his view. Time and opportunity are afforded to all in different proportions, and it is only by labouring in time and profiting by opportunity that we can look forward with satisfaction to the unchangeableness of eternity. In the solemn consciousness of these reflections I now appear before you. That holy and honourable office into which those to whom the nomination was intrusted have been pleased, under Providence, to call me, must henceforth, for a time at least, become the end of my thoughts and the guide of my exertions. To the duties of that office I must bring a willing mind in the fulness of its strength, and regulating my views by the directions of the

pious Founder, stretch forth my faculties to the utmost of my power in an humble, but earnest endeavour to illustrate the evidences and elucidate the difficulties of revealed religion.

As it has fallen to my lot to be the first to hold the office of Christian Preacher, I may perhaps stand excused if I should abstain for a little from its peculiar topics, to indulge the feelings of gratitude, and pay a merited tribute of respect to the Founder, by entering somewhat at length into the circumstances of his life, the nature of his bequests, the subjects which he more particularly proposes for our investigation, and the advantages which may be conceived, and perhaps were contemplated by him, as the result of his appointment.

Of the life of Mr. HULSE but little is known. He was born about the beginning of the eighteenth century, and after having passed through the usual course of academical studies as a member of the venerable society of St. John's College, in this University, proceeded to the degree of a Bachelor of Arts in the year 1728. What might have been his literary attainments, or his moral habits at that period of his life, the remoteness of the time and the failure of all written documents and human testimony leave us altogether at a loss to deter-

mine. The strict and impartial system of examination which now so happily prevails amongst us, and the regular arrangement of honours and classification of names which now ascertain, apportion and transmit to posterity, the exact degree of merit which is due to each individual for the industry and ability he has displayed in the prosecution of his youthful studies, were then unknown or unattended to. At least we have to lament, that if any method of appointing to each candidate for a first degree his proper place in the scale of merit, was so early in use, either the Examiners themselves have forgotten to record, or their successors been too careless to preserve the list. Under this obscurity we can only, and we may surely be permitted to, conjecture, that he who in his latter years expressed so fervent a solicitude for the interests of religion and virtue, must have been early habituated to serious thoughts; and that he who so well remembered his Creator in the last act of his life, could scarce have been unmindful of Him even in the proudest days of his youth.

After having fulfilled the common and preparatory exercises of education, Mr. Hulse entered into holy orders in the English church, and commenced the labours of ministerial functions, upon a small curacy in the country, where it was his lot “to spend many years of a life, which, as I think,”

he observes,* “ that no man did ever envy, so, I bless God that no man could ever reproach.”

Upon the death of his father, he appears to have quitted this situation, and to have passed the remainder of his days in singleness, in retirement, and in piety, upon the land of his paternal inheritance in Cheshire, enjoying with moderation its fruits, and distributing of its abundance in charity to man. There was the usual place of his sojourning upon earth; there did he endure, with submissive meekness and resignation to the will of heaven, “ the most acute and extreme pain” of a lingering disease, soothing himself, in the intervals of suffering, with the charms of music; and there, in the year 1789, did he yield up his peaceful and patient spirit to the God who gave it, and dropped into the grave in the age and reverence of more than seventy years.

In the few and insignificant particulars which I have here detailed, consists the whole of what we have been able to gather concerning the circumstances of the Founder’s life. We cannot but regret the scantiness of the information they afford concerning him, but let us at the same time console ourselves with this reflection, that it is not material, further than the satisfaction of a grateful curiosity

* See Mr. Hulse’s Will, p. 40.

might prompt the inquiry, to follow the steps of our benefactor through all the changes and chances of his transitory being. The claims of Mr. Hulse upon our affectionate remembrance rest not so much upon the deeds of his life, as of his death,—upon those wise and holy bequests in which we may read the indelible traces of his piety towards God, his love for the everlasting welfare of mankind, and his commendable interest for the prosperity of that University which had been the mother of his knowledge and the nurse of his faith. To these bequests, therefore, I would now beg leave to direct your momentary attention, whilst I endeavour to lay before you the excellent and unexceptionable ends they have in view, and the pure and unmingled motives which would seem to have prompted their original establishment.

The estates which Mr. Hulse has bequeathed to the University of Cambridge are of considerable value, and the whole of the revenue is directed to one and the same object, the advancement and reward of religious learning. This general stream of benevolence is divided, however, into three principal channels,* one of which is intended to recompense the exertions of the Hulsean Prizeman;

* There is also an endowment for two Hulsean Scholarships in St. John's College, Cambridge.

another, those of the Christian Advocate; and the third, those of the Christian Preacher, or Hulsean Lecturer, by whichever title it may be thought proper to distinguish the character in which I now appear before you.

With regard to the first of these institutions which awards an annual prize of forty pounds to the writer of the best Dissertation upon some subject connected with the direct or collateral evidences of the Christian Revelation; we may observe, that it ought principally to be considered as a means of exciting the zeal, and directing the studies of intelligent and younger men into a course of theological and religious inquiries. It is, in fact, strictly confined to those who are neither of the degree nor of the standing of Masters of Arts, and can be conferred but once upon the same individual; thus plainly proving, that it was intended by the Founder to stimulate the industry of the slumbering, and draw forth latent talent in defence of the Gospel. In this point of view it is scarce possible to imagine an appointment more useful in itself, or better calculated to raise up a succession of able and godly men to fill the other and more laborious situations for which Mr. Hulse has provided, and to discharge their duties with such fidelity and power, as may reflect honour upon themselves, bring credit to their University,

and communicate to the world the inestimable blessing of a sound instruction in righteousness.

The office of Christian Advocate is the second institution of Mr. Hulse, and though it cannot be more beneficial in its remoter consequences, it certainly may be regarded as more immediately useful and positively important in checking the progress and prevalence of Infidelity and Scepticism. The duty of the Christian Advocate is, in the first place, to obviate by annual or more frequent answers, such popular objections as may be raised either against natural or revealed religion, whether those objections be new or old, original or revived.—It is in the second place, to be ready to satisfy, in a private way, those real scruples and doubts which may be felt by any fair and candid inquirer, who is sorrowfully and perhaps hopelessly struggling, unaided and alone, against the darkness of ignorance and the burthen of difficulties. In one word, the Christian Advocate is to go forth and meet the spirit of Infidelity in all the varied forms which it may assume, to unmask the hideousness of its seeming beauty to the eye of the unwary, and to calm the bewildered mind, by showing it the unsubstantial nature of the phantom of doubt by which it is disturbed. I can scarce conceive of any possible mode of exerting the talents of a man or of a minister, which could be more actually useful and

satisfactory than this ; and if the office itself have not hitherto produced so many publications, as the number of years during which it has been established would seem to promise, the deficiency must be referred rather to the circumstances of the times than to any other cause. Since the year 1803, when the first appointment took place, until the present time, but few novelties have appeared in the unbelieving world. The awful issue of irreligion and insubordination in the crimes and horrors of the French Revolution, gave a practical demonstration of the beneficial influence of Christianity which, for a moment at least, hushed every murmur against its utility, and silenced every sophism against its truth. But as the remembrance of those calamities and iniquities has gradually died away, and the return of peace has restored men to leisure for other thoughts than those of securing their own immediate safety, the voice of daring disbelief has again been heard in our cities and our streets, and it is greatly to be feared, that few of the years that are about to come, will come unaccompanied with some sneer against what we believe, or some blasphemy against what we adore. Happy is he who has been called to the task, and may possibly become the providential instrument of enlightening the unlearned and confirming the unstable in the principles and practice of a saving faith !

The third and last appointment of Mr. Hulse, is that of the Christian Preacher, and it forms indeed an admirable completion of the whole scheme of this excellent man for the benefit and promotion of religious truth. The task of the Christian Preacher is, as far as relates to the subject matter of his labours, the same with that of the Christian Advocate, and the only difference lies in the method he is to pursue in his religious lucubrations. As the Advocate is to guard the frivolous and unwary against the fallacy of prevalent and *particular* objections to the truth or holiness of religion; so the Preacher is to employ himself in a more *general* statement of the evidences of revelation, and a more copious and systematic elucidation of its difficulties.—The Advocate is to prop the falling or recal the wandering Christian. The Preacher is to build up the unestablished babe in Christ, in the solidity of a reasonable faith; and both together are to bend their unremitting energies to the same holy end, the glory of God and the salvation of souls, by the propagation of the pure and undefiled religion of the gospel.

Such are the wise foundations of Mr. Hulse. The first is intended to rouse the mind to religious pursuits, the two latter, to employ it, when trained, in the actual labours of religious usefulness.

I am now to proceed to the investigation of those motives, by which the Founder may be conceived to have been influenced in his conduct; and upon these, I think, we shall have but little difficulty in forming a favourable determination, if we consider the aspect of the times in which he lived, and the solemn and overflowing expressions of godly zeal which adorn and sanctify the pages of his last Will and Testament.

Mr. Hulse was born, as I observed, about the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the former part of that century was disgraced by a more copious list of unbelieving writers, than can be furnished by any other equal portion of our history as a nation. The names of Toland and of Tindal, of Chubb and of Collins, of Morgan and of Shaftesbury, who all flourished within the period to which I allude, are sufficient, without the recapitulation of others, to redeem the accuracy of the assertion I have made. It would not then be an unfair, or an unnatural, supposition, to imagine, even in the absence of all positive information as to the real motives of the Founder, that, living as he did, in an age when the spirit of Delusion had transformed itself into an angel of Reason, his mind became so deeply impressed with the danger of the Church, as to resolve to devote the gifts of fortune to the service of God, and so endeavour to avert from his

country the bitterness of spiritual death,—We are not, however, left entirely to the inferences of conjecture upon this subject; for the Founder himself has explicitly and repeatedly alluded in his Will, in terms of the most lively sorrow, to the prevailing evil of the times upon which he had fallen, and has expressed his hope that, in an age so unfortunately “abandoned to vice, and devoted to shameful infidelity and luxury,” his bequests might “prove a means, through the divine grace, to induce others to the like charitable, and, as he humbly hoped, seasonable and useful benefactions.”* Here then it is, in the holy desire of guarding the ignorant and indolent against the deceits of a false philosophy, and the pleasing prospect of rousing others to co-operate in the same work of beneficence, that we are to look for the origin of these religious establishments, and it is most certainly a consolatory reflection, that the benefits bestowed upon us were not suggested, like so many other charitable benefactions, by the feelings of remorse, of caprice, or of vanity. In the sight of man—for in the sight of God we may call no man righteous—the Founder was a good and holy man, nor can we frame to ourselves the suspicion of any presumptuous and flagrant violation of laws, human or divine, the consequences of which

* See Mr. Hulse’s Will, p. 26 and 42.

he might have foolishly sought to obliterate by a vain and posthumous act of beneficence. It is also satisfactory to know, that the kindness by which we profit was not accompanied by the loss to a wife, a brother, or a child, of that inheritance to which kindred and the laws had given them a natural claim and a legitimate hope.—The Founder of our institutions died childless and brotherless and unmarried, and has also taken particular care to vindicate his endowments from the charge of injustice, by stating that he had disposed of his property to charitable purposes, only “after a proper provision being made by his Will for his several relations, he having left no children, nor his relations having any.” To relieve him, in the last place, from the imputation of vanity in his holy deeds, one anecdote has providentially escaped the general forgetfulness of the other incidents of his life, to convince us at once of the singleness of his heart and the piety of his intention. It is related of him by his favourite servant, who still lives, that he was sometimes heard in the solitude of his chamber and the silence of the night, pouring out his soul in humble and fervent prayer to God, that he would, of his abundant mercy, be pleased to bless the disposition which he had made of his property for religious ends, and cause it to prosper, in the establishment of the belief and practice of Christianity, to his own glory, and his people’s

welfare. A similar and solemn prayer for a benediction upon his charities is added at the conclusion of his Will, in which he beseeches that “the divine blessing may go along with all his benefactions, and that the greatest and best of Beings may, by his all-wise providence and gracious influence, make the same effectual to his own glory and the good of his creatures.” If a man ever speaks with sincerity, it is in the secret act of solitary prayer, and in that last communication of his thoughts which he lays before the world, and I cannot conceive a proof more convincing of the pure and holy views of this pious man, than what is here afforded us by these two evidences of his goodness.

What then remains for us ! What, but that whilst we bless the memory of the just man, we be careful also to follow the example of his holiness, and, like him, both now and often, to lift up our voices to the throne of God, and beseech him that he, who alone can give wisdom to the simple, and strengthen the hands of the feeble, would be pleased so to bless the efforts even of the weakest of his servants, in the fulfilment of an awful and laborious office, as to make them, however unworthy in themselves, to become effectual, through grace, to the conversion of sinners, and the salvation of souls.

DISCOURSE II.

HEBREWS, *chap. ii. ver. 4.*

“ And by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.”

IN a former Discourse, I first of all, laid before you the obligations of a minister of religion, as they relate to the exercise of his intellectual powers. I then referred to the very few incidents which are remembered of Mr. Hulse's life, and briefly touched upon the ends and motives of the several benefactions he has bestowed upon the University of Cambridge. I would now enter into a more particular examination of the duties of the Christian Preacher, and the manner in which they are required to be performed. The materials of this inquiry must of course be solely derived from that instrument by which the office itself was established; I mean the last Will and Testament of the Founder himself, by which “ he, being dead, yet speaketh ” to us, of his intentions in the bequest, and which, whatever may be its difficulties in a legal point of view, is, as a moral picture of the writer's mind, a very beautiful and affecting document.

The will of Mr. Hulse opens in a strain of

fervent and undissembled piety, and refers in a mingled tone of gratitude and resignation to the mercies and miseries of a lengthened life. It speaks the undisguised language of his heart, as if he were already in the presence of his Maker, and places his dependence for resurrection and joy, where alone the solid and reasonable confidence of a sinner can be placed, on the merits and mediation of a blessed Redeemer. Thus he begins :—

“ In the name of God, Amen. I, JOHN HULSE, of Elworth, in the county and diocese of Chester, clerk, and once a member of the College of Saint John the Evangelist, in Cambridge, though at this time in a very infirm state of health, and for many years past afflicted with the stone, and the most acute and extreme pain, yet of sound mind, memory, and understanding (praised be the great and gracious Author of my being for this and for all his other undeserved mercies), on a due consideration of the certainty of death, and the uncertain time thereof, do make and publish this my last Will and Testament, in manner and form following. And first, I desire, with the deepest reverence and submission, to resign my soul into the hands of Almighty God, the greatest and best of Beings, whenever his all-wise providence shall call for it, humbly relying (through

the gracious influence of his Holy Spirit) on the merits, mediation, and satisfaction, of his blessed Son Jesus Christ, our only Saviour and Redeemer, for the forgiveness of my sins, and a glorious immortality: And my body I commend to the grave, to be interred in such manner as I shall by a note under my hand, in writing, direct, and for want thereof, in a decent but private manner, at the discretion of my executors. And as to such worldly estate as it has pleased the divine goodness so graciously of late years to bless me with, I do order and dispose of the same in the following manner."

Having thus poured out and relieved the feelings of his mind before God, he proceeds to devise his estates to various persons and purposes;* but that with which alone I am at present concerned, is the part in which he speaks of the foundation and labours of the Christian Preacher, which he thus solemnly and seriously introduces to our notice, as a plan which he had long and maturely meditated :

" It was always," says he, " my humble and earnest desire and intention, that the following

* It is not, perhaps, unworthy of remark, that Mr. Hulse cancelled several legacies, because the individuals to whom they were bequeathed had afterwards fallen into immoral habits.

donation and devise should be founded, as much as possible, upon the plan of that profoundly learned and successful inquirer into Nature, and most religious adorer of Nature's God, I mean the truly great and good (as well as honourable) Robert Boyle, esquire, who has added so much lustre and done equal service, both by his learning and his life, to his native country and human nature, and to the cause of Christianity and truth."

No example more useful or excellent could possibly have been selected by any one for his imitation, than that of the sincere Christian and sound philosopher whom Mr. Hulse has here placed before our view; nor could he have employed terms of more unpretending piety to mark the heartfelt seriousness of his own intentions in the same venerable cause.

"To the promoting," therefore, "in some degree a design so worthy of every reasonable creature," he proceeds to the appropriation of certain rents, for the appointment, under certain conditions,* of a clergyman and graduate of the University of Cambridge, to deliver and to print twenty Sermons† every year, either upon the evi-

* Those conditions are, that he shall be a Master of Arts and under forty years of age.

† Ten are to be delivered in April, May, and June. The remaining ten, in September, October, and November.

dences of Christianity, or the difficulties of Holy Scripture, or both. But, perhaps, it will be better, first of all, to transcribe the Founder's own words, and then add a few remarks upon the utility of the plan they prescribe.

“ To shew the evidence for revealed religion, and to demonstrate, in the most convincing and persuasive manner, the truth and excellence of Christianity, so as to include, not only the prophecies and miracles, general and particular, but also any other proper or useful arguments, whether the same be direct or collateral proofs of the Christian religion, which he may think fittest to discourse upon, either in general or particular, especially the collateral arguments, or else any particular article or branch thereof; and chiefly against notorious infidels, whether atheists or deists, not descending to any particular sects or controversies, so much to be lamented amongst Christians themselves, except some new or dangerous error, either of superstition or enthusiasm, as of Popery or Methodism, shall arise; in which case, only, it may be necessary, for that time, to write and preach against the same.”—Such are the liberal and comprehensive terms in which the Founder has described one portion of the duties of the Christian Preacher. With regard to the other, he is equally judicious, and directs, that he “ shall

take for his subject, some of the most difficult texts or obscure parts of Holy Scripture, such, I mean, as may appear to be more generally useful or necessary to be explained, and which may best admit of such a comment or explanation, without presuming to pry too far into the profound secrets or awful mysteries of the Almighty.

The first observation which we are unavoidably led to make upon this sketch is an expression of approbation, at the free and extended range of inquiry which it leaves to the Preacher's choice. It does not confine his labours to any one particular branch of theology, but leaves the whole science open to his investigation, and thus gives full scope for the exertion of every individual's understanding, upon that subject with which he is best acquainted, or which he may find it most congenial to his feelings to pursue. To convince men of the truth of their religion, is the primary end of all our endeavours. A second and not less important object is, to instruct them clearly and thoroughly in its nature and obligations. Both these ends are here amply provided for; the former, by directing our attention to a statement of the proofs of Revelation; the latter, by requiring an illustration of its obscurer parts; and, together, they comprehend almost all which, in a theologi-

cal point of view, it is necessary for any private Christian to be informed of.

To the extensive sphere which is thus laid open for the researches of the Christian Preacher, we may add the prudent manner in which his duty is required to be performed. There are, in many of those works which have been written for the conviction of heretics and infidels, too frequently to be found a tone of triumphant sarcasm and the bitter levity of satirical reproof. Even the wit and wisdom of the provincial letters of Pascal are, from this cause, not altogether worthy of the unmingled admiration of a devout Christian; * and

* The use of ironical language and railing upon serious subjects was objected to Pascal, by his enemies, even in his own day, and the eleventh Lecture is devoted to a defence of his conduct upon this point ;—a defence more objectionable even than the fault which was attributed to him; inasmuch as it vindicates his method of controversy, by a very irreverent attempt to prove that irony and raillery have been adopted by the Deity and the Redeemer of the world. Yet strongly as I feel the justice of my remarks upon the style of Pascal, I should scarce have ventured to state an opinion, so contrary to the general prejudice in his favour, had I not been able to add the impartial and decided expressions of Schlegel in corroboration of my sentiments.

‘ The provincial letters of Pascal, have, in consequence of the wit and beauty of their language, become standard works in French literature, but if we would characterize them by their import and spirit, they form nothing more than a master-piece of sophistry..... Every one must admit that the author, à

when we recollect that it was the custom of Gibbon to gather fresh strength for the warfare of subtility and sarcasm against Christian truth, by an annual perusal of these very letters,* we may perhaps begin to doubt whether ridicule, severity and reproach, be legitimate weapons in a meek and defensive Christian. I am far, however, from thinking that triumph is not justified by the excellence of the cause we have to defend, or from asserting that the misrepresentations and unfair sophistry of our adversaries, have not, on some occasions, been wilful and worthy of strong censure. But I would seriously recommend those whose only object, if they be sincere in their belief, ought to be the conversion of the unbeliever, to consider whether it is not at all times most consistent with the spirit and precepts of Christian charity, to presume (for who, but God, can know the hearts of men?) that our opponents are as sincere as ourselves. Still more earnestly would I beseech them to reflect, whether it must not have a greater

as he was, employed his genius in a very culpable manner, when he set the example of writing concerning religion, in a tone of apparent levity and bitter sarcasm."—Schlegel on Literature, vol. II. p. 188, 189.

* "I cannot forbear to mention three particular books, since they may have remotely contributed to form the Historian of the Roman Empire. 1. From the provincial letters of Pascal, which almost every year I have perused with new pleasure, I learned to manage the weapon of grave and temperate irony, even on subjects of ecclesiastical solemnity." Gibbon's *Memoirs of his own Life*, p. 67. 4to. ed. of his *Miscell. Works*, vol. I.

tendency to promote the outward prevalence and inward influence of the Gospel, to strive to gain souls to Christ, by a forcible representation of our own views of the evidences of his divinity and truth, set forth in the winning words of meekness, than by the most irrefragable demonstration of deistical errors, accompanied by the sharp and bitter reproaches of the pen. At least we may assume, that whoever ventures in the discharge of the duties which attach to the office of Christian Preacher, to introduce the violence of forbidden passions, and the use of ungentle language, will not only act inconsistently with the name he bears, but also transgress the positive rule which the wisdom of the Founder has laid down for his observance ; the rule, I mean, of demonstrating in the most *convincing* and *persuasive* manner, the truth and excellence of Christianity. For he who renders railing for railing, may reason indeed or rebuke men into sullen silence ; but never will he be able by his bitterness to “persuade” them into an acknowledgment of the truth of what he defends, or by wrath to “convince” them of the excellence of the Gospel ; whilst proving to demonstration, by his own conduct, how little is the efficacy which its precepts and principles have obtained over his own heart.

Mr. Hulse has thought it necessary to impose only two restrictions in the choice of subjects upon

those who may be appointed under the direction of his Will, and both these restrictions appear to have been dictated by the purest and soundest feelings and views. One of them relates to the evidences, the other to the difficulties, of Revelation.

With regard to the evidences of Revelation, he distinctly prescribes that the Christian Preacher shall direct his efforts principally against those “notorious infidels, whether atheists or deists,” who are the enemies of the common faith, and never descend (to use his own words) to any of those “particular sects and controversies, which are so much to be lamented amongst Christians themselves, except some new or dangerous error, either of superstition or enthusiasm,” should prevail. In this latter case alone does he permit the multiplied differences and disputes of Christian divines to be nourished and perpetuated by attaining to the dignity of an authorised and public refutation. It would have been well for religion had this rule been more generally observed. Without alluding to any existing controversies, I think it may be fairly admitted, that many of those which ecclesiastical History presents to our view, as disturbing the beauty of the Church of Christ, were idle and unimportant in themselves. Yet were they often, in their day, as warmly debated as the most vital doctrines, or precepts of religion, and were

accompanied by as much hatred, and variance, and emulation, and strife, as could have been supposed to arise from the passions of men, when interested in questions essential to the virtue or salvation of the world. That the faculties of the human mind were exercised and improved in these wars of reason may certainly be true, and I am not disposed to deny that some pearls may be detected amidst the filth and rubbish with which the Scholastics defended themselves or assailed their adversaries. We cannot, however, deny, that their talents might have been much more beneficially employed, in illustrating the simple doctrines of the Gospel, or enforcing its appropriate precepts. It may and indeed it must sometimes be necessary to resist the progress of error and correct the perverse disputers of this world by argument; but we should never needlessly descend into the arena of controversy, never forget the temper and prudence which the Christian contest requires, or make use of weapons disproportionate to the magnitude of the warfare. Every man is apt, either from a desire of stimulating his own energies, or from the effect of long contemplation upon one subject, to magnify the importance of that point of polemical Divinity upon which he is engaged, beyond its real merits, and to attribute such evil consequences to the opinions of his opponent, as that opponent himself would absolutely shudder at,

and an impartial examiner would never have perceived. The Deist has not forgotten to take advantage of this weakness. He has judged the Gospel out of the mouth of the polemic, and, collecting together into one mass the numerous disputes of Christian Churches or writers, and estimating their importance by the lofty terms in which the disputants themselves have spoken of their different sentiments, has very artfully inferred—that, since the religion of Jesus has left, even in the confession of its friends, so many and such essential doctrines in a state of absolute uncertainty, there cannot be much satisfaction in embracing it as a rule of faith, or a ground of hope for the happiness of a future state. In the very same manner the Papist reviles the purer form of the Protestant system of belief, and deduces, from the variation of Protestant creeds, the necessity of an infallible guide upon the earth. That the inferences of both these sorts of reasoners are invalid, is allowed; but where men permit the liberty of thinking, and expressing their thoughts, to degenerate into licentiousness, they must needs expect that the Infidel will turn it to his own account, and that the unconfirmed and wavering Christian will be misled by his specious conclusions, into a rejection or doubt of the credibility of the Gospel scheme of salvation. No course, therefore, would appear to be more useful or prudent than that which Mr. Hulse has so earnestly

recommended, of giving our principal diligence to guard the rock upon which the Christian city is built, from the open or concealed attacks of its acknowledged adversaries, and never too rudely to assail its sincere well-wishers, even though we may conceive them to be mistaken in their notions, unless their errors should be new, or dangerous and prevalent. If new and prevalent, it may be wise to check and correct them, before they become inveterate by long establishment. If dangerous and prevalent, the duty of resistance is too plain to require a single word of exhortation. But if they be neither prevalent nor dangerous, it would be manifestly imprudent to give them, whether new or old, that additional degree of importance and notoriety, which necessarily attaches to every thing which has been made the subject of public and systematic disquisitions. The very best method of opposing many of the minor wanderings of the human intellect is, to leave them to fall by the weight of their own absurdity, or else gradually to die away and be forgotten because neglected.

In selecting for the subject of his inquiry “some of the more difficult texts or obscure parts of the Holy Scripture,” Mr. Hulse directs the Christian Preacher to understand him, as alluding chiefly, if not exclusively, to such as he may deem

“ more generally useful, or necessary to be explained, and which may best admit of such a comment or explanation, without presuming to pry too far into the profound secrets and awful mysteries of the Almighty.” This limitation is the result of wisdom and humility. There are things, we know, which the angels themselves, not perfectly understanding in all their parts and bearings, desire to look into ; and I can scarce imagine that such a desire, which is said to inhabit the bosoms of celestial beings, can be in itself sinful ; because no censure is passed upon it, or even implied, in the words of the Apostle. To muse, indeed, upon the wonderful works of the Almighty, whether in nature or in grace, is one of the noblest employments of the human imagination ; and to stretch out our faculties to the utmost, to discover the reasons and modes of the divine operations, till, wearied with conjecture, we sink back to earthly things, and confess our utter inability to comprehend the height, and breadth, and depth of the Almighty Mind, may be made one of the best of schools, in which to learn the lesson of intellectual humility. But this is not “ to presume to pry into the profound secrets and awful mysteries of the Almighty.” It is rather to adore and profit by them. To pry into heavenly things is, when a man would measure the wisdom of the Deity by his own, and vainly attempt to assign the causes

and course of all those actions and dispensations of God, which have a reference to the whole sphere of creation, and comprehend the interests of endless worlds and beings, of whose nature and destination we have no knowledge whatever. Even in judging of a fellow creature's proceedings, we must often perceive how inadequate our powers are, to estimate the motives and ends for which he acts ; and even in the more complicated systems of human invention, we are sometimes compelled to confess our ignorance of the mechanism by which a curious or useful result is produced. Surely it much more becomes us to be cautious in tracing the processes of the Creator's thoughts, which are not as our thoughts, and to be content to be baffled in our researches into the propriety of the means which he has employed to effect the most glorious and blessed work of our own redemption. Man may conceal the secret of his knowledge from his fellow man, either to retain the distinction of superiority, or to secure the reward of his successful industry. But God keeps his creatures in ignorance, not for his own benefit, but for theirs ; not to hold them in a state of degrading inferiority, but to reward them for their submission to his inscrutable will. It is the dictate of humility, therefore, to abstain from presumptuous inquiries into mysteries. It is the part of wisdom also ; for no great degree of useful knowledge can ever be

looked for from such discussions. The vain pursuits of Alchemy were certainly the parents of some few useful discoveries; but the progress of science has been much more rapid, and it has imparted information of a far more solid and important nature, since the labours of its disciples were directed to legitimate and attainable ends. It will be the same too, and in a much higher degree, in the pursuits of Theology. For, even were we to lay aside out of our consideration all reasoning from the usual course of God's providence in other things, we could never, in consistency with gospel principles, expect the blessing of the Holy Spirit to guard us from error, or lead us into truth, whilst presumptuously endeavouring to scan the deep and hidden things which God has put within his own power. A similar remark may also be made upon that other restriction which we have already considered. If we refuse to follow the steps of our blessed Saviour, and choose, when reviled, instead of being meekly silent, to revile again, how can we hope that God will give efficacy to those words of bitterness which are so contrary both to the spirit and commandments of his will? Exclusive, therefore, of the natural tendency which intemperance in language has to irritate the mind, there seems to have been a positive bar placed to its success, by the express revelations of God's providence. We have no promise whatever that

the grace of the Holy Ghost, which alone can touch the conscience, will empower those who bring “a railing accusation” against any man, to melt the stony hardness of an unbelieving heart. Neither can we entertain any reasonable expectation, that the wanderers from the fold of Christ will ever be allured to their home again, by the voice of him who would call them back to the deserted flock, rather by the rudeness of wrath, than the accents of kindness.

The end of the commandment is charity. The end of all inquiry and discussion upon the principles of faith should be, the practice of the precepts of pure and undefiled religion. Now it is of the nature of the reasoning processes of the mind, to turn away our thoughts from the application, and to fix them only upon the establishment of truth. Thus we may often speak to the head without moving the heart; or, on the other hand, we may frame the most earnest appeals to the affections; but if we have not previously laid a solid foundation in the knowledge of the rudiments of Christian instruction, our exertions will terminate only in a few faint and transitory emotions of godliness. But if, after having first sown the seeds of righteousness in a clear establishment of the truth of Christianity, and a pure elucidation of its saving doctrines, we then pour over our labours the re-

freshing waters of holy reproof, correction, and exhortation, we may look forward, with a lively confidence, to beholding the fruits of righteousness grow up under our eye. It were impossible, therefore, that Mr. Hulse could better have concluded his statement of the duties of the Christian Preacher, than by enjoining that “in all the said twenty Sermons, such practical observations shall be made, and such useful conclusions added, as may best instruct and edify mankind.” It is not necessary that, in obedience to this injunction, we should formally subjoin to every Discourse, a regular list of those moral inferences, which may be successively deduced from the substance of our argument. It is only necessary that we should avoid such a dry and didactic treatment of the evidences and difficulties of Revelation, as can have no effectual influence over the affections. It is absolutely necessary that we should pour out the fulness of the heart, as well as of the understanding, upon these sacred subjects, and endeavour to prepare an easier and a readier way for the reception of truth, and the conversion of the inward man, by aiding reason with the unction of godliness.

I feel considerable hesitation in mentioning the last observation I have to offer, as it implies a doubt at least of the wisdom of the provision to which it

refers, and is one in which, as holding the situation of Christian Preacher, I am myself individually interested. Mr. Hulse has ordered that the whole of the twenty Sermons which are preached, shall, every year, be printed. The subjects which they embrace can never, perhaps, be too much investigated. The evidences of Revelation can scarce be too frequently repeated, or endeavours to illustrate its difficulties too extensively multiplied. There is such a variety of minds in the world, that something useful, if not original, or something suited to some particular individual's feelings, may be expected from every different writer's views. The fluctuations in taste and language are also constantly rendering it requisite to remodel old arguments, whilst the progress of science, or changes in its terms, render it equally necessary to invent new arguments to meet unforeseen objections. For scepticism, taking advantage of every casual and successive circumstance, is ever varying the nature and mode of its attack. Still, however, there are limits to the multiplied forms of infidelity, and it would be too much to assert, or expect, that every year should produce something so new or dangerous, as to justify so large an annual publication upon the same topics. The attention of the public must, therefore, necessarily become wearied by such a constant repetition, if the provision be complied with, and the energy of

the writers themselves languish, under the entire hopelessness of being able to give additional interest to what has been so often and forcibly urged before. There is another inconvenience which may likewise sometimes attend this regulation—The Lectureship is permitted to be held, at the option of the trustees, for five or six years in succession by the same individual. Should that ever be the case, and should the Preacher be compelled to annual publication, he might thus be forced to give to the world the disjointed portions of a system, whose value and validity depended principally upon being considered in connexion as a whole. There would be much evil in this, not only to the credit of the Author and the University, but, what is of infinitely more consequence, to the cause of religion itself. I would, therefore, with great submission suggest, whether it might not be advisable to adopt some method for altering, or limiting, or annihilating this provision altogether. There are, perhaps, Authorities in the kingdom, if not in the University itself, whose powers render the execution of the measure practicable, and there is no reason whatever to fear, that religion or science would suffer by the change. No one can justly complain of the fewness, though some have raised their voices against the rapid multiplication of books upon theological subjects. There will always remain such a sufficient number of motives to write and to publish, as will take away every

apprehension of our being deprived of any works of real importance, even though every future Christian Preacher were left to the dictates of his own inclination. Were I to say more upon this point, I should be trespassing upon the province of those within whose sphere the consideration of the subject more immediately falls; but I could not, with the opinions I entertain, pass it altogether without notice.*

I must now draw these lengthened remarks to a close, and I do so, first, by congratulating the University upon the new sphere of usefulness which is opened to its members. Works of great value may not be very often added, by the Christian Preacher, to the already accumulated stock of theological productions; but the office will always hold forth to men in the vigour of life, a motive and a field for the exertion of talents, which might otherwise have perished for want of exercise, or been wasted in pursuits frivolous and desultory. The preliminary discipline of mathematical studies, which forms the leading feature in our general system, is calculated, above every other exercise of the mind, to train it to habits of close thinking, and clear and accurate reasoning. It may, however, be carried to excess, or cultivated to the exclusion of more essential, because sacred, ac-

* See the Appendix.

quirements; and it does sometimes happen, that those who have been honoured with a high rank in the degrees of scientific merit, do not afterwards make a progress in other branches of learning, proportionate to their early and academical promise. Perhaps in general this failure may be attributed rather to a want of exertion, than of power; whilst that want of exertion itself may be traced to the difficulty of selection amidst so many various subjects of inquiry, and the absence of every stimulus at all equal to that by which the student was first influenced—the prospect of youthful distinction awarded, without partiality, amongst a number of equal competitors. The world is not half so fair a theatre. There it is often favour, often ignorance, that assigns the palm to an individual, under circumstances where it is almost impossible to frame a scale of comparative merit. Here, in the University and in the struggle for the honours of a first degree, equals contend, knowledge tries the cause, and justice and experience apportion the reward. In after-life, it never will be so. Let me therefore beseech the young to prize and to strive for these honourable distinctions. If they lose it now, the opportunity can never be with them again.

I conclude, secondly, by congratulating those who may hereafter hold the situation of Christian Preacher, upon the peaceful and useful labours of

holiness which are prepared for their reception. It is, not to be misled or confounded in their understandings, by the subtleties of a false philosophy—It is, not to be irritated in temper, and have the feelings of charity quenched, under the corrupting influence of controversial bitterness ;— But it is, to strengthen their own and others faith, by setting forth, in their brightness, the solid evidences of Christian truth—It is, to be taught, and to teach, the excellency of God's wisdom, “ even the hidden wisdom which was ordained before the world unto our glory.”—It is, to follow the example of Paul, and to know and to preach “ Jesus Christ and him crucified,” that they will be called. The heart that cannot be warmed into rapture by the prospect of employing its faculties in such a cause, is even dead, while it liveth. Yet would we beware of boasting. “ The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,” because they “ are spiritually discerned,” discerned through the influence of the Spirit operating upon our understandings for good. Whilst we rejoice, therefore, in the enthusiasm of present love and wonder, for the grace and glories of redemption, let us ever remember to depend solely upon the continuance of the aid of the Spirit, that the faith which we build up, in others or ourselves, may not stand “ in the words of man”—a weak and a sandy foundation—“ but in the power of God,” a rock everlasting and unmoveable.

A P P E N D I X.

INFLUENCED by a desire of directing the attention of those who are officially or personally interested in Mr. Hulse's Will, to a consideration of the provisions in which he requires the printing of the whole of the Sermons delivered annually by the Christian Preacher or Lecturer, I have taken the liberty of inserting in this Appendix a few additional remarks upon that subject. My only anxiety was, and still is, that it should be carefully examined and decided, whether some alteration, either in their form or extent, may not be judicious and possible: and what the nature of that alteration ought properly to be, in order to preserve, if not increase, the advantages of the office, in a religious and literary point of view.

There appear to be three different methods of modifying the provisions of Mr. Hulse. First, it may be done by absolutely reducing the number of Sermons, to be both preached and printed, from twenty down to twelve or ten; in which case the Lecturer would be able to devote a greater portion of his time and attention to their composition, and by labour in writing and condensation of thought, be enabled to render his ideas at once more clear and forcible. A second method which suggests itself, is that of leaving the number of Sermons to be preached unaltered, and making the change only in the provision which relates to printing; which change may be effected either by stipulating some number less than twenty, which shall always be committed to the press, or by leaving the matter entirely at the option of the Trustees, or of the Lecturer himself. The third method, is that of both reducing the number to be preached, and removing the necessity of printing altogether. But in this there would be so great and manifest a violation of the Founder's intentions, that no one, I apprehend, would venture to recommend it as either judicious or just.

Which of the three preceding changes should be adopted, I

presume not to decide, but I would venture to offer a few suggestions upon two schemes, in both of which the labours of the Lecturer would remain undiminished, whilst the usefulness of the situation would probably be increased.

Mr. Hulse has pointed out the months of April and May and the two first weeks in June for the delivery of the ten Sermons which are to be preached in Spring; and as the University continues filled, both by Undergraduates and others, during the whole of that time, no period would seem to be better suited for the purpose. But the case is very different with the Autumnal course. For the ten Sermons to be delivered in the Autumn, the months of September and October are appointed, during almost the whole of which months the University is, comparatively speaking, deserted, and the ordinary inhabitants of the parish of St. Mary, form the principal part of the Congregation in the University Church. At such a time, therefore, the more erudite labours of the Hulsean Lecturer would seem to be much out of their place. Under such circumstances it would surely be no improper step to alter the *time*, at least, for the delivery of these latter Sermons; and to transfer them to some other period. Now, it so happens that, under the present arrangements, the Morning Sermons at St. Mary's are by no means so fully attended as those in the Afternoon: probably because the Select Preachers are appointed only to take the Evening Discourses, and the supply of the Morning Preachers, being left to individual choice or chance, has gradually generated a degree of inattention and neglect, which cannot but be very seriously lamented. It may seem, therefore, to deserve attention, whether by making the Hulsean Lecturer responsible for ten of the Morning Sermons during the continuance of the Terms, and whilst the University is full, we should not have a prospect of restoring that regularity in attendance, which cannot but be considered as desirable, both for the character of the University itself, and the spiritual edification of its members.

Another plan, and one which, if I might be permitted to express my private sentiments, I should prefer, is this; to change one half, at least, of the Sermons to be delivered by the Hulsean Preacher, into Theological Lectures. The Founder has given

to his Preacher the option of delivering his Discourses either on the *Friday* Mornings, or the Sunday Afternoons; thus plainly, I think, declaring, that he thought they might often assume the form of Lectures in Divinity, rather than of Discourses upon practical religion, and consequently be but little suited for the spiritual improvement of those who attend the worship of God upon the Sabbath-day. To make a partial change from Sermons into Lectures, would not, therefore, appear to be any great deviation from the Founder's intentions. Now the Norrisian Professor of Divinity delivers his Lectures only during two of the annual Terms at Cambridge. The third, the Midsummer Term, is at present destitute of such Lectures. Would it, therefore, be injudicious to permit the Hulsean Lecturer to combine the whole of his labours into that Term, and whilst he is preaching eight or ten of his Discourses from the pulpit on Sunday, to deliver the remaining ten or twelve to the Students in Divinity on the other days of the week? I merely allude to these propositions as perhaps not inexpedient.

But the great question still remains to be considered, and that is, whether there be any possibility of making any alteration, however necessary and just, and where the power of making that alteration rests.

It will be found, by a reference to Mr. Hulse's Will,* that, in case the persons appointed to fill the offices instituted by him do not discharge the duties he has specified, their respective salaries are to be divided in equal shares amongst the six Senior Fellows of St. John's College, in Cambridge. It further appears,† that the Bishop of Ely, as Visitor, has authority "to see that the benefactions and endowments of Mr. Hulse be all of them applied to the uses intended, *in a just and proper manner*; and in case of any perversion or misapplication in all or any of them, to rectify the same in a summary way, *with reason and equity*." Hence it would seem, that if the Visitor and the Trustees and the Six Senior Fellows of St. John's College, could reconcile it to their consciences to permit any deviation whatever from the strictest letter of the Founder's Will, by waving the exercise of their

* Page 23.

† Mr. Hulse's Will, p. 23.

authority, and the assertion of their claims, they might certainly do so in any instance in which they apprehended that, from the beneficial nature of the change, the endowments of Mr. Hulse would still be applied, in a just and proper manner, to the uses intended; which uses he frequently declares substantially to have been, the diminution of infidelity, and the promotion and increase of religious learning. The interpretation I have here given of the Founder's words, may not, perhaps, be that which is literally and legally correct; but it is undoubtedly most perfectly consistent with his ultimate views and wishes; and it remains, therefore, with those who have the power to act upon this occasion, to consider with themselves, whether they would be justified in allowing of any alteration at all, or whether, in particular, they would adopt any one of those several alterations which have been already proposed. With them it rests to examine, whether the religious and literary advantages to the world, to the University, and to individuals, may not become greater by a general conformity to the principles of Mr. Hulse's bequests, than a rigorous and undeviating adherence to the very letter of a Will, which, in many instances, it would be inconvenient, and in some almost impossible, to follow.

I shall only conclude by expressing my hopes that the observations I have made will stand excused from the accusation of presumption, and be regarded as arising from a simple sense of duty.

DISCOURSE III.

MATTH. chap. xi. ver. 2—5.

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his Disciples, saying, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?.....Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.

CHRISTIANITY opens to our view a wide and almost boundless field of moral and religious speculation; of all that tends to the promotion of social order, of domestic happiness and inward peace. To love God and to love man; to be thankful to our Maker and Redeemer, and have fervent Charity one towards another; to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep ourselves unspotted from the world; precepts of the most earnest piety, the most refined purity, and the most exalted and extensive benevolence;

—these form the substance of the Gospel, and are scattered with a bountiful profusion over the whole face of the sacred writings. And it is to this inexhausted and inexhaustible treasury of divine truths that we have the blessed privilege of applying for instruction and consolation. It is hence the ministers of religion draw the matter of their discourse, and lead their hearers to the realms of bliss by the mild, undeviating light of that pure and heavenly wisdom which is from above.

We must remember, however, that a well-grounded faith is the only solid foundation of practice, and that in all the relations of life something must necessarily be believed before any thing can be done. If we are to comply with the laws of the land and the ordinances of the magistrate, we must first know that there is an authority to enact those laws and a power which is enabled to enforce the penalties attached to their transgression. If we are to come to God, as his worshippers under a form of natural religion, we must believe, from the contemplation of nature, “that he is,” and from the deductions of reason upon the general tendency of his proceedings, “that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;” and to the certainty or probability of these important inferences we must

look for the only grounds and motives of our obedience. If, again, we are to become the disciples of a religion which claims a divine original as one of the revelations of God, we must first of all believe that it was so revealed : and if, in particular, we are to pay an implicit deference to the words of Christ, and to follow every tittle and iota of his commandments as our Lord and Master we must previously be convinced that he is our Lord and Master, endued above measure with the Spirit, and armed beyond example with the authority of heaven. We must be satisfied that the character which he assumed did really belong to him, and that he was in fact what he unequivocally declared himself to be, the Messiah of God, and the Saviour of the world. If, in the last place, we would live *wholly* as Christians, we must believe wholly as Christians, and yield an unfeigned and unreserved assent to the truth and divinity of the *whole* of our religion. It would thus appear that religious faith, under some of its modifications, is the root of all moral practice, and no other foundation therefore can any man lay, whereon to build the temple of the beauty of holiness, than that which is laid in the holy Scriptures, where righteousness stands uniformly connected with faith, and disobedience is referred to a principle of unbelief. “Without faith” of that kind and in that degree

in which by our situation we are capable of attaining it, “it is impossible to please God.”*

Nor is this all. Were a mere profession or possession of belief the whole of what was required of us by the Gospel, it would be needless to dwell upon the evidences of revelation before those who, from whatever cause, whether from prejudice, from ignorance, from education or from inquiry, had already become convinced of the certainty and divinity of that religion under which they had been born. But it so happens that we Christians are called upon, in the language of an inspired Apostle,† to be in a state of constant preparation to satisfy the inquiries of any one who desires to ascertain the validity of those grounds upon which our opinion principally rests. We are not only to know the leading and fundamental arguments by which the system of Christianity is supported, for our own comfort; but we are to know them with such precision, and to recollect them with such facility, and to state them with such clearness, and to arrange them in such order, that we may “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh of us a reason of the hope that is in us.” This forms a part of our general duty as Christians, and I

* Heb. xi. 6.

† 1 Pet. iii. 15

cannot therefore but deem that course of education, however excellent in other respects, to be defective in itself,* which sends forth any individual into the active scenes of life, unfurnished with that preparatory and essential information upon sacred subjects, which may empower him to think and to reason upon the religion he has embraced, with satisfaction to others, and with ease to himself. For my own part, then, though I cannot pretend to fulfil the request which has been made to me by some, of laying down “a regular course of Divinity for those undergraduates who do *not* intend to enter the Church,”† yet do I feel it unavoidably to fall within the sphere of my appointed duties, to endeavour to lay before them such an impartial and connected view of the evidences of the Gospel, as may serve to distinguish the relative value of each particular branch, and point out the respective share which the miracles and the prophecies, the life and the doctrines of our Saviour, possess, in contributing to the final result. To depth or novelty I prefer

* The internal discipline of particular Colleges supplies this defect in the Cambridge system of education; but in the Public Examination for degrees, the religious knowledge thus acquired is not brought to the test, and receives neither commendation nor reward.

† A few days before I commenced these Lectures, I received a letter containing this request, and stating that several had felt the want of such a course.

no strong or exclusive claim. It would be strange indeed, and much to be lamented, as well as wondered at, if the uninterrupted efforts of eighteen hundred years, had left much to be gathered in the field of evidence. A few ripe and fruitful ears may have been forgotten in haste, or overlooked by carelessness, but the riches of the harvest must long ago have been gathered by the first and most assiduous reapers ; nor can we expect to employ ourselves in any other or more useful labour than that of sifting the produce and ascertaining its aggregate amount. Still more idle will it be, to study to be difficult, in the hope of being counted as profound. Difficulty is in itself no essential mark of excellence, and the wise providence of God has so ordained it, that the most valuable truths are usually the most simple and easy to be understood.

The words of my text contain the most essential part of our Saviour's answer to the inquiry of John the Baptist, whether he was or was not the Messiah. " When John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, saying, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" a circumstance which must, I think, be generally known and remembered. It is attended, however, with one peculiar difficulty. The question, at first sight,

appears to have been altogether unnecessary, John having already and frequently acknowledged Jesus as that Prophet which was to come into the world. When the Priests and Levites were sent from Jerusalem to question John as to his real character and pretensions, and to learn whether he himself was not that great Deliverer of whom a general expectation was at that time entertained in the East, “ he denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ.” * He owned that he was not that Light, but was sent only to bear witness of the Light, and prepare the way of the Lord. In consequence of this confession, when our Saviour afterwards came to fulfil all righteousness and be baptized of him in Jordan, he, at first, hesitated, from a sense of his own great unworthiness to perform so honourable an office to one so much his superior. His scruples were, however, at length over-ruled, He saw the Spirit of God descending in a bodily shape, and resting on the head of Jesus. He heard a voice from Heaven, saying, “ This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased ;” and then, in the fulness of conviction, he freely and openly declared to every one, upon whom his testimony could have any influence, that this Jesus of Nazareth, whom he had baptized, was indeed the Lamb of God and

* John i. 20.

the Saviour of the world. After such a public and unequivocal declaration of his sentiments, and after having heard of all the many and mighty miracles which our Saviour performed, and which were rumoured throughout all Judea, it does undoubtedly appear singular that he should yet think it necessary to send two of his disciples to inquire, whether he was that Prophet which was to come, or they were to look for another. Upon this point we should have supposed him to have been already thoroughly satisfied.

For the resolution of this difficulty it has usually been maintained, that the inquiry did not originate in any doubts which the Baptist himself entertained, but was merely instituted for the satisfaction of his unbelieving followers, who might, perhaps, have so great a respect for their immediate Master, as to be unwilling to acknowledge the superior power and dignity of any other prophet. It is certainly possible that this might have been the reason of the inquiry; but there are yet several weighty objections to this statement of the case, which induce me to prefer a different opinion. When the disciples of John first came to our Saviour, they immediately announced both by whom and for what purpose they had been sent. "John Baptist," said they, "hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he

that should come, or do we look for another?" In answer to this demand our Saviour first repeated in their presence many of his most astonishing miracles,* and healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, restored sight to the blind, raised the dead, and then dismissed them with this command, "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see." The message had been sent by John, and to him the answer is not only generally, as in the natural course of things, but more peculiarly and specially directed. Now this is a form of expression which, I think, our Saviour would scarce have used, had he not been assured that the satisfaction of the Baptist himself was principally intended. For Jesus knew what was in man, and needed not that any one should tell him the object of their requests. He perceived men's thoughts long before, and generally directed his answers to the thoughts, rather than to the words, of those by whom he was questioned. Such also then we might naturally expect would have been his conduct upon the present occasion; and had he been aware that the inquiry was prompted rather by the doubts of the disciples than of their Master, it is highly probable that he would have changed his language and said, "Ye have seen my miracles and

* Luke vii. 21.

ye have heard my doctrines—Go, then, believe, and be no longer faithless.”

But upon this principle the original difficulty still recurs, and we have still to account for the uncertainty which the Baptist experienced in his own mind. In this, however, if we will duly consider the circumstances in which he was placed, and the channel through which the fame of our Saviour's miracles had hitherto been communicated to his ears, we shall find but little, if any difficulty at all. John was now lingering out his life in captivity under the tyranny of Herod, far removed from the scene of our Saviour's glory, and of course entirely deprived of the power of becoming himself an eye-witness of his miracles. To this the Evangelist expressly directs our attention, when he introduces his account of the message, by observing, that “John had *heard, in the prison, the works of Christ.*” The only means, therefore, which he possessed of ascertaining whether any miracles had really been wrought, and whether the person by whom they were said to have been wrought was that very Jesus whom he had himself baptized, was, by making the necessary inquiries through the medium of those in whose honesty and fidelity he could place implicit confidence—those who knew the person of Jesus, and who would faithfully relate to him the

things which they beheld. For though the wonderful mercies of Christ might be, and were, actually rumoured through all the region round about, yet so many false prophets had already arisen, to whom the multitudes had liberally attributed miraculous powers, that little could be gathered from that circumstance; and the voice of common fame is, at any rate, of too fleeting and uncertain a nature to form a sufficient foundation for our belief in any matter of difficulty and importance. The disciples of John might also, and as we are informed, did shew him of all these things. But it is by no means certain that they spoke of them as wonders which they had seen with their own eyes, or as facts which they knew from their own experience. It is rather probable, from the course which John afterwards pursued, in sending two of them as his messengers to our Lord, that they had merely detailed them to him as the subjects of general and common conversation. But the Baptist was not so destitute of sense and prudence as to trust the issue of his faith upon the very slender credit which is due to a flying report. To remove those doubts, therefore, which were unavoidably and rationally inspired by the suspicious channel of the testimony, he chose two of his disciples, on whose observation and fidelity he could best rely, to ascertain the

truth or falsehood of the rumour which had reached him. They came, they saw, they heard, they believed, and then returned with the glad tidings of certainty to their Master. And he also heard, and he also believed. His uncertainty was built upon just and reasonable grounds. It was the result of a want of confidence either in those who bore witness to the miracles of Jesus, or in the identity of the person by whom they were performed. When that want of confidence was once removed, the effect ceased with the cause, and he became thoroughly convinced. For Scripture often speaks to us as positively by its silence, as its assertions, and in the future pages of the Evangelist we meet with no other symptom whatever of the Baptist's doubt.

Such is the very simple and sensible explanation which was originally given of this difficulty in the earlier ages of the church, by the author* of those questions which stand amongst the works of Justin Martyr: and it is somewhat singular that the opinion should have been so soon and entirely forgotten, that I have looked for it in vain either in the majority of the fathers or the more modern Commentators.—Every wild and

* “ He sent his disciples to ascertain whether the person who performed these miracles was or was not the same person to whom he had himself borne witness.”—Quest. and Respons. 38.

hypothetical imagination which fancy could suggest they have successively proposed and approved, whilst this solid answer has always had the fate to be deserted. It has been held by some, that John doubted, because the miraculous powers of Christ were not exerted for his own deliverance from captivity; whilst others have supposed that by the question which he asked, “Art thou he that should come?” he did not mean to inquire whether Jesus was the Messiah who was to come as a Saviour upon the earth, but whether he was that being who was to go down to the habitation of departed souls and there “preach to the spirits in prison,” which were sometime disobedient in the days of Noah. But let us leave these idle vanities, which have nothing but a shew of seeming wisdom to recommend them, and turn to the practical advantages which may be derived from the examination, for the improvement and security of our own faith.

It is evident, then, that the answer of our Saviour, was both intended by himself, and received by the Baptist, as a satisfactory answer to the question he had proposed. The question proposed was this, “Art thou he that should come,” the promised Messiah of the Scriptures? The answer therefore must be conceived to convey to every one who may be placed in circumstances resem-

bling those of the Baptist, a solid and sufficient demonstration that Jesus was the Christ. Is it so? We are placed in the situation of John. We, like him, are imprisoned by the tyranny of time within the narrow limits of the age in which we live, and cannot get forth to hear the doctrines of Jesus by sitting at his feet, or become convinced of his miracles by the testimony of our senses. But, like him also, we have the testimony of others, who declare that they have both seen and heard these things. What the first disciples spake to their contemporaries by the tongue, they still speak by their writings unto us, in a voice which is living and irresistible. Into the arguments for the genuineness and integrity of their testimony I cannot, and it is happily unnecessary, to enter. The subject is too comprehensive for the brevity of my plan, and has been almost exhausted by the enlightened labours of others. This only I will say, that the genuineness and integrity of the sacred writings, as containing the evidence of the Apostles of Jesus, are supported by more numerous and varied testimonies, both of friends and enemies, designed and casual, explicit and incidental, than those of any other author whatsoever: and let him that thinketh otherwise but take the trouble of instituting the comparison. Is there, then, to be found for us in the books of the New Testament a proof of

the fundamental article of the Christian creed, that Jesus was the Messiah?—a proof, I mean, as credible and as satisfactory as was the answer of our Lord to the Baptist? If there be, what is the nature of that proof? These are the questions upon which we are now to debate and determine, and my endeavour will be, to shew that the proof is in both cases complete, and, with a few necessary limitations, the same.

To justify our assent in any of those matters of faith, where acquiescence is demanded upon the authority of others, there are only two things (the genuineness of the testimony being supposed) of which it is necessary to be assured; the credibility of the witnesses, and the sufficiency of what they allege to establish the point in dispute. If the witnesses be unworthy of confidence, it matters little how decisive their testimony may be, and if the testimony be inconclusive, the truth of the witnesses themselves will be of little avail; but where both are united, the controversy is at an end. Upon these two things then hangs all the weight of the Christian religion; and the result, whether favourable or unfavourable, will be the same, to whichever of the two we first direct our attention. I shall therefore proceed to consider them in the order in which they stand,

and examine, first, the credibility of the witnesses themselves.

If it be asked upon what ground of credibility the Baptist relied, when he trusted to the report of the individuals whom he had sent to Jesus, we answer, with boldness, upon their number and upon their character. In the mouth of two witnesses was every thing established before him, and those witnesses were the objects of his own peculiar choice, men of good report, and persons with whose fidelity and integrity he was fully acquainted. They had no prejudices to mislead their judgment, in favour of the pretensions of our Lord; no interest to serve by deceiving their Master, by falsifying, by misrepresenting, by magnifying or by diminishing what they had heard and seen.

Such were his own disciples unto John, and such also, but in authority more unimpeachable, are the Apostles and Evangelists of Christ unto us, more numerous, more capable, more faithful, and more disinterested witnesses of the truth. Yet perhaps I should scarce say that they were disinterested; for they were solicited by the united ties of nature, of habit, of education, and of religion, to resist even the evidence of their

senses, and stifle the very firmest convictions of their mind. They were tempted to a denial of their Master by every motive which usually influences the actions and opinions of men; by the sense of difficulty and danger, by the love of ease, and the little prospect which they enjoyed of success. They were tempted to unbelief by the various prejudices they had to combat, both in themselves and others, by the persecutions to which they were liable, the self-denials to which they were called, the disappointment of all their favourite schemes, hopes, and ideas, and by the poverty and wretchedness, the stripes and death to which they were doomed, both by the nature of the case and the prophecies of their Lord. Yet did they resolutely maintain that Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified Jesus, was the great and promised Deliverer of Israel, and voluntarily submitted to a strict and rigid system of morality, to every variety of fatigue and suffering, in the laborious and, to all human probability, the hopeless undertaking of propagating his religion. It is true, indeed, that for once they all forsook him and fled. But that confirms instead of weakening their testimony, because it arose from a want of adequate and correct views into the nature and dignity of his doctrines. They beheld him only with the eyes of the flesh. They looked to him as the Redeemer of Israel, not from the

bondage of sin, but the sorrows of servitude; not from the power of Satan, but the authority of Cæsar. They trusted that he would be the Conqueror of the world, and they themselves called to sit down upon his right hand and upon his left—to become the rulers of provinces and wield the sceptre of dominion in some tributary kingdom. This charm of the imagination was, however, quickly broken by his death. Reflection came to the aid of Reason, and cheered by his resurrection, and illuminated by his Spirit, they went on from virtue to virtue, and from faith to faith. They at once assumed a new character and new dispositions. Their own views had been graciously corrected, and with the benevolence of upright and honest men, they endeavoured zealously, but without enthusiasm, to correct the errors and the prejudices of others. In the confidence of their integrity, and the mild firmness of their sincerity, they proclaimed remission of sins through faith in Christ Jesus—that Jesus whom the Jews had crucified and slain, but whom God had raised from the dead. They every where preached the Gospel of peace, till either the force of truth triumphed over the blindness of error, or they themselves fell victims in the cause, and sunk under the malice and persecution of their enemies. Their trials were deep; but in all their trials they ever spoke and acted as those

who thought it better to obey God than man, and as those who could not but testify the things which they had heard and seen: and as in the hour of his distress they had all forsaken their Saviour and fled, so did they afterwards endeavour to expiate their crime, by forsaking all, to return to him again, and follow him in the face of terror and of misery, even through the valley of the shadow of death. If this be not sincerity, I know not where sincerity can be found. It may be, that some, besides the Apostles, have died rather than retract the false assertions which they had previously made; and hence we may infer the possibility, at least, of a similar occurrence in the present case. But where are those that have died *as* the Apostles died, to be found? I know of none. If there be any who have entered into the gates of the grave rather than retract testimony which they had borne to what was false, it has been for maintaining the truth of false opinions and not of false facts that they so suffered. Or if there be any, and I deny not that there are some, who have suffered for bearing testimony to facts which we are persuaded are false, it has been under circumstances where a renunciation of their testimony would not have saved them from death. It has been with criminals alone in the hour of execution and the hopelessness of pardon from a confession of guilt,

that a perseverance in a false assertion of innocence has been found.* But there is an important difference and a manifest superiority in the case of the Apostles, to both of them. They suffered not for stubbornness of opinion so much as the assertion of facts, and not for the mere assertion of facts alone, but for the continued and undeviating assertion of facts, of which, if they would have renounced their belief, they might have lived and been rewarded. Such were the followers of Jesus Christ; and even their persecutors when they viewed their patience under suffering must have felt and acknowledged their sincerity in their fortitude—must have perceived that they spoke of what they knew, and *thought*, at least, that they had seen the wonders which they recorded.

But have we not here introduced a circumstance which vitiates the credibility of at least some portion of their evidence? If the works of Christ were of such a wonderful nature, is it not possible that the understandings of the Apostles might have been so confounded by the awfulness, and unsettled by the glory, of the scenes to which they were admitted, as to make them *think* that they had seen what they never saw, and so to

* The Ashtons at Lancaster, and two criminals at the last assizes at Carlisle, died declaring their innocence against the clearest proof of their guilt.

mistake and misrepresent the mighty acts of the Lord, as to render their testimony admissible only to a certain extent? In answer to this question, let us contemplate for a moment the character of the facts themselves.

One of them is this. “There arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves, but Jesus was asleep.”* Now, who is there, with the common senses of mortality about him, that could not give a clear and decided testimony to an occurrence so usual and yet so striking as this? Again, it is said, that his “disciples came to him and awoke him, saying, ‘Lord, save us, we perish.’” And who that has the feelings and memory of a man, would not recollect to the latest hour of his life the fears he had experienced, and the words he had uttered, in a moment so trying and so terrible? Lastly, it is observed, that Jesus “arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, ‘Peace, be still.’ And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.” And who, I would ask, that had ears to hear, would not remember the answer of his Master in such an hour? Or who that had eyes to see, could refuse to mark the change which had been wrought upon the waters of the deep?

* Matt. viii. 24, &c.

Take another instance. “When Jesus was come into Peter’s house, he saw his wife’s mother laid, and sick of a fever.” The fact is simple in itself, and one of which the testimony of the most unlearned is a sufficient proof; and as little could the most careless be mistaken in that which immediately follows: “And he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she arose, and ministered unto them.”*

Now, what is there in either of these narratives that should make us doubt the competency of an honest man to give a clear and consistent testimony? The circumstances are all in themselves of ordinary occurrence. That a fever should quit the body of a woman who was sick, and that she should rise from her bed to return to her usual occupations—that the tempest should cease its raging, and the troubled billows of a stormy ocean become still—in all this there was nothing to confound the understanding or mislead the judgment of them that saw it. I do not pretend to say, that all the works of Jesus, which the Apostles beheld and have recorded, were of the same simple and ordinary character. I know that many were of a different complexion. I have followed my Redeemer to the solitudes of Galilee,

* Matt. xviii. 14.

and there marked the amazement of the disciples' mind, as they looked upon the glory of his transfiguration, and were sore afraid, neither knowing what to think, nor wisting what to say. I have seen him walking in the hour of darkness upon the waters, and scarce wondered at the faithlessness of Peter. I have been with the Apostles to the Mount of Olives, and, struck dumb with the wonders of the scene, have continued gazing, with them, abstractedly up into heaven, vainly endeavouring to pierce the cloud by the intensity of my vision, and catch another glimpse of my ascended Lord. I have meditated solemnly upon all these things, and humbly confess, that had I been admitted, like the Apostles, to behold them upon the earth, I know not whether I could have held the possession of my faculties unimpaired. But what of this? If by arguments deduced from those miracles of Jesus which were of a more common and less confounding nature,—if by inferences drawn from those wonders where mercy, unmingled with awfulness, prevailed, and where there were no splendid terrors to drive Reason from her seat, and where there was nothing, therefore, that could impeach the credibility of the witnesses,—if by the testimony of the Evangelists to simple facts, we can once fairly establish the divine authority of the Gospel,—the certainty of every

other wonder it records, however awfully glorious or sublimely obscure, must follow in the train of its various consequences. We may not, perhaps, be authorized to reckon the Transfiguration or the Ascension amongst the number of those premises from which the truth of Christianity itself is in the first instance, or solely, to be drawn; but, when once that truth has been ascertained by any other means, the truth of these wonders becomes a necessary and irresistible conclusion, because they form a part of what has already been proved to be true. It is requisite to mark and remember this distinction between the different kinds of our Saviour's miracles, because it is by exclusively directing his efforts against those which are more singular in their nature, that the Deist would disturb the repose of the Christian upon the credibility of the Evangelists.

Seeing, then, that they lived a life of suffering, and died a death of torture in the cause, the Apostles of our Lord must be allowed to have been faithful and unprejudiced witnesses, and their testimony, as such, to be substantially true.

Deny, then, what we may, and disbelieve what we will, we cannot overthrow the credit which is due to the inspired writers, or call in question

the general truth of the Gospel History. One of the leading propositions contained in that History is this, that Jesus was the Messiah ; and, in confirmation and defence of their opinion, the Evangelists have detailed the miracles which they saw, the doctrines which they heard, and the prophecies which were fulfilled. The only doubt, therefore, which can possibly remain, is, whether what they had thus heard and seen, be a sufficient proof that Jesus was indeed the Christ. Having shewn that the Evangelists are witnesses as credible to us, as were his own disciples unto John, the only further question to be considered is, whether the testimony of the Evangelists be of the same conclusive character. But this is an inquiry of too extensive a nature to be comprehended within the short remainder of the present Discourse ; and I shall, therefore, conclude with a few plain and practical reflections.

Were I speaking to the natives of some distant clime—did I bear the venerable character of a Christian Apostle to the deluded votaries of Mahometism or idolatry—did I stand as a missionary upon the shores of India, where the convert to the Gospel becomes the outcast of society, despised and hated and rejected of men—I might point to the animating example of the first disciples, and shew, by what Christians have

suffered, what Christians are able to suffer, for the sake of their religion. But, by the blessing of God, in this happy and well-favoured land, Christianity has grown to be the religion of the state, and an essential feature in the laws of the land. Christianity, too, is here in its purest and its mildest form, declaring in our Articles, that nothing is to be pressed upon the consciences of men which cannot be found in Holy Scripture, or may not be proved thereby. Here, then, we stand in no fear of being sacrificed to idols or slaughtered by bigotry. Benevolence is the spirit of the Gospel, and moderation the practice of our church. Here, then, it may be hoped, we shall have no cause to prove the sincerity of our faith by the patience of our suffering. But still, though free from every outward harm, we have a hidden and a powerful enemy within us. We have still to struggle with the strength of our passions and the corruption of our nature “The flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit:” and thus far at least “it is through much tribulation that every man must enter into the kingdom of God.” Wherefore, that we may be the better enabled to resist our temptations, and conquer our weaknesses, and mortify our members, and triumph over the affections of our hearts, and quench within us the lusts of youth, the ambition of manhood, and the avarice of age,

let us be clothed with the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. But, above all, let us take unto ourselves “the sword of the Spirit,” which is the word of God; that, whilst with the hope and helmet of salvation, we guard our minds from terror and despair, with this “sword of the Spirit,” with some godly text of Scripture rightly applied, we may cut asunder every flimsy thread of reasoning, which the ingenuity of man has perversely formed, to distract the feelings and disturb the understandings of weaker brethren. “It is written,” said our Saviour, under his temptation by the devil; “It is written,” was all that he said, and he vanquished his adversary. Search the Scriptures with fidelity and meekness, and make the same answer in your own temptations, and you will soon learn to feel the force of the Word of God, and to confess that it is the only instrument which erring man can safely use in his great contest with the enemies of his soul.

DISCOURSE IV.

2 TIM. chap. iii. ver. 13.

“ Deceiving and being deceived.”

THE honesty and sincerity of the Evangelists as men, and their credibility as witnesses of the facts and doctrines which they declare that they had seen and heard, are of such primary and essential importance in every inquiry or attempt to prove the truth or divinity of the Christian religion, that I considered it as absolutely necessary to repeat, in my last Discourse, those various arguments which have been so often and forcibly urged in defence of their testimony. Upon a review of those reasonings I am unable to perceive their deficiency or inconclusiveness in any single point, or to imagine that there is any thing either in the circumstances under which their evidence has reached us, or the facts to which that evidence relates, which should disturb, in the

smallest degree, our confidence in its genuineness, or our belief in its substance. There are others, however (God is their judge), who, coming forth before the world with pretensions to a juster mode of reasoning, and a more impartial spirit of philosophy (but, as I humbly conceive, both “deceiving and being deceived”), have ventured to pronounce a different opinion, and to affirm, that, however credible the Evangelists might be to their contemporaries, they are no longer possessed of the same authority. They assert, that the lapse of time which has passed away since the Scriptures were written, has gradually undermined the strength of their testimony; and that, even had that strength not been thus weakened by the canker of ages, it would have been insufficient to bear the weight which is imposed upon it, of assuring us of the occurrence of a variety of *miraculous* facts. Now, if in examining the principles by which these conclusions are supported, we can find, that they are altogether inapplicable to the Christian writers, we shall have done sufficient to vindicate our own holy faith, and without entering at all into the general soundness of the reasoning when applied to cases of a different complexion. It shall, therefore, be my endeavour to shew that the cause of Christianity is of such a nature as to be exempt from the force of these objections, however great

may be that force when directed against other religions.

1. In the first place, we are to consider the circumstances under which the testimony of the Evangelists has reached us.

Now, it is evident that we ourselves have not, like the primitive Christians, either seen the works or heard the words, or been conversant with the person of our Saviour, or of his Apostles. All that we reason upon as to the religion of Jesus, and all that we know of the character, and conduct, and doctrine of his immediate disciples, is derived, *as a matter of history*, from the testimony of others—from the dwellers in distant countries, and in ages remote from our own. Hence it has been insinuated by some, that the probability of the truth of Christianity, like the probability of all other matters of history, must have suffered, from the very nature of the case, a considerable and unavoidable diminution of its force, by being transmitted through a number of successive individuals and generations; so that whatever might have been its original credibility, that credibility they pronounce to have undergone a very serious reduction. “The diminution of evidence by this species of transmission may,” says Laplace, “be compared to the extinction of

light by the interposition of several pieces of glass. A small number of pieces will be sufficient to render an object entirely invisible, which a single piece allowed to be seen very distinctly." *

Now, I can easily admit that if the report of any fact were to be transmitted through twenty individuals, in different countries, and in regular succession, and we ourselves were to receive the account from the twentieth witness alone, a very serious degradation of probability might have taken place, and our reliance upon the reality of the fact would necessarily be reduced in proportion to the circumstances of the case. The *insulated* testimony of some tenth transmitter of a wondrous tale, however credible in itself, can never be counted of equal certainty with that of the original witness or agent in the transaction. But if the person who communicates the fact in question to us, can refer us back to the person from whom he himself received the account, and we could thus pass from country to country, and consult the whole series of witnesses, till we arrived at the source and fountain of the report itself, the uniformity of their several testimonies would, in that case, materially strengthen our belief, and the probability of the fact would suffer no diminution whatever. If an inhabitant of

* Edin. Rev. 1814; No. XLVI. p. 825.

Scotland were to assert the existence of some splendid monarchy in the centre of the African desert, as a fact which he had heard in Italy, from those who had travelled into Spain, and there met with some merchants of Tripoly who had received the accounts from several wandering Arabs, who declared that they had visited its metropolis, and beheld its greatness, my confidence in the existence of such a monarchy would be reduced in proportion to the credibility of the fact, the number of transmissions, and the possibility of deception or mistake. But if by travelling back in regular order through the several links in this chain of testimony; if by visiting Italy and Spain and Africa in person, and in succession, I could trace the report through all its steps (finding it always uniform), till I had arrived at the original propagators, the probability of the fact would be the same to me as to the very first individual to whom it was communicated. In this manner I should remove, as it were, the interposing pieces of glass which prevented the transmission of the light of truth, one by one, and be enabled, at last, to perceive and to judge of the object presented to my mental eye with the same distinctness and certainty as the first hearer of the story.

Of a similar character, as I conceive, is the

historical evidence for the truth of those facts upon which Christianity is founded, with this only difference, that our distance from the original witnesses is that of centuries instead of countries, and that the testimony is consequently written and perpetuated instead of being oral and transitory. It is not merely that the writers of the present day assert that eighteen hundred years ago the Apostles and Evangelists bore a record to Jesus, which record is true; for then, indeed, my reliance would scarce arise to any high degree of evidence. But the real and correct statement of the question is this; I can begin with the writers of the present day, and tracing their evidence upwards in a regular and unbroken succession, and comparing and verifying it as I go along, can reach at length the testimony of those primitive Christians who heard the Apostles declare that they had seen the Lord and his works, and even of those Apostles themselves who have recorded the same. So far, therefore, as the credibility of those reporters may extend, so far does the credibility of the facts they have reported extend also, and is the same to us, as it was to those to whom it was originally given. The truth may not be so easily and immediately perceived in this case, as in those in which there are no intermediate witnesses, because the attention and labour of verifying the report through all its

stages is great and tedious. But when once the task has been accomplished, the conclusion is equally satisfactory and sure : and the fallacy of supposing otherwise seems to me to have arisen from the practice of considering the testimonies to the genuineness of the New Testament, that is, to the genuineness of the original records of the works and words of Jesus, in a descending instead of an ascending series. In *descending* from the age of the Apostles to the present time, we not only begin with a period in which, from the very nature of the case, the testimonies are more scanty and few ; but we are obliged also to take for granted the age and genuineness of the works from which we quote, until the whole demonstration has been completed. On the other hand, in *ascending* upwards from the present writers, the whole line of our argument is natural and conclusive. We take for granted nothing but what is the subject of our own individual experience, the existence of certain books in which we read that their writers received the genuineness of the New Testament upon the authority of their predecessors for many generations. We turn to those predecessors in regular order, and find them constantly testifying the same, and thus at length, by regular gradation and infallible reasoning, we reach the source and fountain of the historical stream. It

has always, therefore, appeared to me, in my meditations upon the genuineness and credibility of the apostolic records, that the only, or, at least, the most judicious plan of treating the subject would be that which has so lately been pursued by a learned Prelate in his Lectures from this place, namely, to arrange the testimonies in a retrograde order, beginning from the present time, and going upwards to the apostolic days ; and I doubt not but that the impression produced upon the reader's mind by such a method will, when properly managed, be found much more convincing than in the ordinary way.

From the preceding observations it appears that were there no more than one chain of testimony from the days of the Apostles to the present,—were there no more than one witness in each succeeding age, we should have no more reason to refuse our assent than the first person to whom the Gospel history was recounted. But this is not a correct statement of the question. There are many chains of testimony from the days of the Apostles to the present. There are many witnesses in every succeeding age ; and consequently, if we will deal technically with the subject, the probability or possibility that any single witness or chain of witnesses should deceive or be deceived, must be opposed by the im-

probability or impossibility that so many witnesses or chains of witnesses should be deceived; and the improbability of the latter would soon be found to be so great as to obliterate the former in the mind of every reflecting man.

It would seem, then, that the objection of Laplace which has been deemed so formidable by some, and which assumes a constantly increasing diminution of probability in the transmission of *every* historical fact, is not applicable to the evidence for the Christian history, because we are in possession of the testimonies of every successive age, and can identify and verify each. The true statement of the difficulty, if any there be, is this; that, in consequence of the number of transmissions, the examination and verification of the evidence requires a much greater degree of impartiality and attention. But when once it has been thoroughly and fairly investigated, the probability instead of being lessened, is perhaps increased by the number and uniformity of the witnesses, every one of whom may be supposed to have scrupulously weighed the matter, before he set his seal to its truth, and many of whom had prejudices which would have naturally inclined them to resist their convictions.

2. We have thus seen that, in all the ordinary

events of the Gospel history, there is no real “degradation of the probability of facts when seen across a great number of successive generations,” because the line of testimony continues unbroken through each. But it has been doubted (and this is the second objection to the admission of the truth of the Apostolic testimony, however apparently credible), whether the same reasoning will apply to events of an extraordinary nature, and whether the improbability of miraculous facts is not superior to that of every other evidence, and to that of historical events, the best established.—“Events,” observes the author to whom I have before referred, “may be so extraordinary that they can hardly be established by testimony.” This is but in other words to urge the celebrated argument of Hume in his *Essay*,* and to insinuate that no testimony, however derived, even from a professed eye-witness, is able to overcome the natural incredibility of miracles. To this author therefore I shall turn, and endeavour to lay before you such a statement of his reasoning as may enable you to appreciate its truth and force under every circumstance.

In the first part of this *Essay*, which relates exclusively to the principles upon which the credibility of miraculous facts, in general, depends

* *Hume's Essays*, Vol. II. p. 109—132.

nothing can be more desultory and unconnected than the arrangement of the matter, nor any thing more loose and vague than the application of the terms ; and as this want of order and precision is peculiarly calculated to confuse and mislead, I shall, before I proceed to reason at all upon the subject, lay before you that methodical series in which, as it appears to me, the premises, upon which the fallacious conclusion against the credibility of human testimony to miraculous facts is founded, should follow each other.

The first and fundamental proposition of Mr. Hume is this, that “ a wise man proportions his belief to the evidence,” and that the credibility of the fact, together with the credibility of the testimony by which it is supported, are what in every case compose the whole of the evidence. Whenever, therefore, there is any incredibility in a fact itself, he holds that this incredibility must be subtracted from the credibility of the testimony, and the balance being struck between them, will give the degree of evidence in favour of or against the fact.

Having admitted this reasoning, than which nothing can seem to be more correct, we must next examine what it is that, in his opinion, constitutes both the credibility of facts and the

credibility of testimony. Now, upon these points Hume lays it down as a certain principle, that “experience is our only guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact,” whether we are reasoning concerning the nature of the facts themselves or the nature of the testimony which supports them. For, with regard to the testimony by which any fact is supported, he asserts, that it is only from our observation and experience of the conformity of facts to the declarations of witnesses that we acquiesce in their truth at all. And with regard to the facts themselves, he maintains that their credibility is to be measured by their analogy to our past experience of the same or similar facts having occurred. If no such fact, therefore, as that which is declared to have happened, has ever happened before, he considers experience, the measure of credibility, to amount in that case to a direct and full proof against its occurrence. If it has been known to have happened but rarely, then the probability of its occurrence is in proportion to that rarity. Hence, if uniform experience be against the occurrence of any alleged fact, whilst the testimony is exceedingly strong in its favour, “in that case,” he says, “there is proof against proof, of which the strongest must prevail, but still with a diminution of its force in proportion to that of its antagonist.”

He therefore concludes, that as a firm and

unalterable experience is against the occurrence of miracles, “the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined,” and he deduces, as a plain and necessary consequence, this general and important maxim ; “that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact it endeavours to establish.” And even in that case he maintains, that “there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force which remains after deducting the inferior.”

To the whole of this reasoning I deem it sufficient to reply by denying that experience is in *all* cases the measure of the intrinsic credibility of facts, and more especially by denying that any presumption can be formed against the reality of the Christian miracles, because miracles have never been known to be wrought upon any other occasion. It appears to me that this proposition of Hume is of too general a nature, and that he was only authorized to assume, that “the intrinsic credibility of facts is to be measured by their analogy to our past experience of the same or similar facts having occurred *under the same or similar circumstances.*” Hence, though we should allow that a firm and invariable experience is against

the occurrence of miracles in all other religions in favour of which they have been alleged, it will not follow that the same experience is against their occurrence in favour of the Gospel, unless we can prove such a resemblance between the cases as to justify the application to the one of the rules deduced from the other. With this important limitation the principle may be adopted both as innocent and correct, and the propriety of this limitation will, I trust, appear evident to all, who will accompany me with impartiality through the following illustrations :

It is the opinion of Hume that “ the Indian prince who refused to believe the first effects of frost reasoned justly,” because those effects “arose from a state of nature with which he was unacquainted ;” but those who reflect with attention upon his conduct, will rather, I should think, be inclined to imagine that he reasoned weakly and concluded hastily. That on a subject upon which he was ignorant he should withhold the fulness of his assent, until he had examined into every thing connected with the evidence, was reasonable and right ; and if after due investigation he had found that the circumstances under which the novel fact was stated to have occurred, were altogether and in every respect the same with those in which he had uniformly observed a different result, he would

doubtless have been authorized in continuing his suspense, however powerful and unequivocal might be the testimony by which the reality of the fact was supported. But that he should *refuse* his assent to any fact, merely because “it arose from a state of nature with which he was unacquainted,” and in which it was therefore impossible for him to say whether the circumstances were or were not the same with those in which he had observed a different effect, was least of all like the conduct of a correct and inductive philosopher, who always presumes that when the results are different there must have been some difference also in the nature of the experiments under which they were produced.—It was, in reality, neither more nor less than turning his own ignorance into the infallible standard of credibility. It was drawing an inference against a fact, which had all the evidence which mere testimony could give it, when even by his own confession he must have perceived that he was uninformed of the premises by which alone such an inference could be justified. I dwell upon the points in which the conclusion of this Indian philosopher was false and unsound, because his reasoning was precisely similar to that of those sceptical philosophers who, in the present day, would reject the Christian miracles upon the ground of their being contradictory to experience. Be it that we are assured by universal experience

that no miracles have ever been wrought for any other purpose, there is still no incredibility in their having been wrought in defence of the Jewish and Christian revelations, because they differ so entirely from every other purpose. In miracles pretended to have been wrought in favour of any particular sect of the true religion, the matter in dispute has always been either frivolous, or unessential, or unholy, or capable of being determined by the subordinate instruments of reason and authority. Again, in miracles pretended to have been wrought in favour of false religions, the whole system, as in Mahometism, has been impure, or, as in Idolatry, repugnant to the first principles of reason, and the fundamental attributes of the Deity. In all and every of these cases, I should therefore indeed doubt the reality of the best attested miracles, and say that their intrinsic incredibility was sufficient to counterbalance the weight of the strongest testimony, because the voice of a constant and uniform experience is against the operation of divine miracles in defence of any object which is either frivolous or unrighteous, irrational or unnecessary. Upon this we may boldly pronounce, because we have had plentiful opportunities of remarking what usually happens in such circumstances. But how can this affect the credibility of miracles in any instance in which the object is altogether of

a different character, and where we have had no opportunity whatever of observing what is the usual method of God's proceeding? Where, as in the systems of the Gospel and the Law, the internal evidence is so strong, the morality so pure, the doctrine so holy, the end so important, the means so wise, and whole tissue so blessed and so worthy of God, as to stand forth without a parallel in the annals of mankind, there the argument from the past cannot possibly apply. We cannot here assume that miracles are contradictory to experience, or even different from our observation, because the fact is simply this, that we are altogether destitute of experience and without observation upon the subject. The voice of experience must therefore be content to be silent upon the proper or probable mode of establishing such a religion as that of the Bible, for nothing like it has ever been seen in the records of human history. The consequence is, that we must throw experience out of consideration whenever we would estimate the natural credibility of the mode in which Christianity is said to have been actually propagated, and measure the extent of our belief in its miracles, by the only remaining branch of evidence, the capacity and fidelity of the witnesses to the facts. Experience is neutral. Testimony is positive. We must turn away therefore from the dumbness of the first, and listen

implicitly and exclusively to the latter. For it is as irrational to reject testimony, when experience is mute, in matters of religion as in matters of philosophy, and as imprudent to deny the credibility of the miracles of revelation, because they have never been observed to have been wrought upon any other occasion, as to deny the freezing of mercury under the pole, because it has never been observed under the equator. The circumstances of the two experiments and occasions being different we cannot with propriety expect the same results in both.

The true doctrine, then, with regard to evidence would appear to be just what we have stated it to be, namely, that our experience of what has already occurred, is a safe guide of reasoning and a sound rule of judgment as to the natural credibility of alleged matters of fact, only in those cases in which the circumstances are similar or the same. Where the circumstances vary, and in proportion as they vary, in the same degree are the deductions from past experience inapplicable, and in the same degree does testimony alone become the measure of truth and the ground of belief.—And this is a rule which leaves the testimony to every fact which is recorded in the Bible, whether it be of a miraculous or of an ordinary kind, both unimpeached and unim-

peachable. The declarations of the Evangelists are equally credible, so far at least as this argument is concerned, whether they record the most uncommon or the commonest occurrences of our Saviour's life; whether they merely relate his birth and his burial, or speak of his bursting the barriers of the grave and planting his footsteps on the waters of the deep. For the Gospel is a solitary and a singular religion, against which we must never presume to judge by the laws which are deduced only from our experience in the common occasions of life.

I should much regret the logical and didactic statements into which I have been thus compelled to enter, did I not hope that they might have a tendency to remove that confusion of the understanding (for few, I should presume, have ever found their understandings *satisfied* with the reasonings of Hume, when applied to the Gospel miracles) which almost every one must have felt when rising from the perusal of his loose and unconnected Essay; and did I not think that there are some useful and important fruits to be gathered even in this wilderness of sophistry. For what shall we say of those who have thus laboured to cast a stumbling-block in the way of every one that would lay hold on Christ? Shall we judge of the motives of their conduct by its

tendency, and say that as it was their endeavour, so it was their hope, to obliterate the remembrance of God's Son from the earth, and blot out his words of mercy to mankind? Or shall we not rather call to mind the words of the Lord Jesus which he spake, saying, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," and acquiesce in the milder censure of the text by supposing that they deceived others, because they were themselves deceived? Strange indeed it may appear that, upon any subject, the cloud of error should cast its delusive darkness over minds like theirs, into which God in his mercy had poured a double portion of the spirit of understanding. Yet it is vain, and happily it is needless, to deny that they, like many other unbelievers, were men of comprehensive genius and a mighty mind. But it is neither the strength nor the acuteness, it is the direction of the understanding which alone can secure us from perversion or error. God gives us our faculties, but leaves their use or abuse to our own responsibility and care. The resistless mightiness of Samson's frame forms the reverential wonder of our childhood, and the belief and meditation of our riper years. We know that such mightiness was given him for purposes of holiness, to impress the terror of God's name on the enemies of God's people, and to bless both himself and others by the lawful exertion of his power. We know all this; but we

know also that the end corresponded not with the intention. Sold by his own fault and folly into the hands of a woman, and brought into captivity under those he was intended to subdue, he remembered with sorrow the waste and perversion of his wondrous gifts, and grasping the pillars of Dagon's house with the yet terrible power of his enfeebled arms, shook the fabric from the foundations on which it rested, and was buried in the ruins which his own strength had made. What is there in the mind to preserve it from the same misguided exercise of its power? Is the spirit of a man relieved from the dangers to which his body is subject, and is the freedom of the agent to abuse his powers, suspended when applied to his intellectual endowments? The history of human opinions upon every science should teach us the idleness of such an expectation, and convince us that there is no subject of inquiry, however clear and incontrovertible in itself, into which the pride and prejudices of the heart will not intrude to disturb the judgment, and teach it to hold fast to that which is manifestly erroneous and confessedly evil. If there be any sphere of investigation in which we might hope that the vanity and passions of mortality would cease to operate, it is in those questions of pure and abstract science which are capable of strict and mathematical demonstration. Yet even here we find that the force of the most

undeniable truth has been sometimes unable to prevail over the perverseness of a powerful and reasoning mind. It is a curious and important fact in the history of the philosophic world, that Hobbes, one of the most ingenious of those who have lifted up their voices against the Lord of life, maintained his mathematical as well as religious errors, errors in which he was condemned and deserted by all, with a fruitless obstinacy and in the face of repeated defeat. It is not then the mere strength of a cause which can repel, nor is it its weakness alone which invites the attacks of adversaries. A thousand unseen springs are in operation to pervert the judgment and mislead the heart in every case, but more especially in the consideration of the truth of the Christian creed, which is so holy in its precepts as to arm against its purity a host of evil inclinations, and so humbling in its doctrines as to make the pride of human reason its natural enemy. In many of those who have laboured in the defence of infidelity we may distinctly trace the operation of this cause of enmity to our holy faith. In the impure imagination of Gibbon, unable to restrain its pruriency even amidst the learned researches of the historian; in the sensual Confessions of Rousseau, and the degrading blasphemies and vices of Paine, we may easily discriminate the origin of doubt or disbelief. The word of God was against them, and therefore they were

against the word of God. But there are many upon whose ruling passion we are not able to lay our finger, and thus point out the principle of error. Ignorant of the windings of the human heart, we must leave the scrutiny of such men's motives to Him who is the Searcher of hearts, and their condemnation to the Judge of all, satisfied with the comfort of being persuaded that the claims of Christianity for our reception and reverence, stand unaffected by the number and nature of her enemies. Conscious, then, of the manifold infirmities which beset the understandings and affections of men, let us remember the double duty we owe to others and ourselves—to others, in lamenting that so many of those who might have been, who perhaps still are, amongst the brightest ornaments of the human race, should have sullied their glory by the sin of unbelief—and to ourselves, by praying that God would direct us aright in the exercise of our own faculties, and preserve us alike from the guilt of deceiving and the danger of being deceived.

DISCOURSE V.

JOHN, chap. v. ver. 39.

"But I have a greater witness than that of John, for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."

THE Jews sent unto John, and he bare witness to the truth. He pointed to Jesus as the promised Messiah. We turn to the pages of the New Testament, and there find the Apostles and the Evangelists bearing witness to the same. But Jesus hath a greater witness than any of these, in the works which the Father had given him to finish. His pretensions are, in part at least, grounded upon the wonders he performed, and, so far, therefore, are to be tried by an examination into their nature and effects. These works the Jews had an opportunity of viewing with their own eyes and in their own persons. and were consequently capable, from their own

individual experience, of at once deciding for themselves as to the propriety or impropriety of our Saviour's appeal to his miracles. Christians and men of later ages, on the other hand, have only an opportunity of learning their nature and number from the testimony of the first disciples, and, of course, the credit due to those disciples becomes a previous question, which it is absolutely necessary to our faith to determine. For, if they be liars, both your hope and our preaching are in vain. If the things to which the Evangelists have borne record be not true, our assurance of salvation rests only upon the airy basis of conjecture and uncertainty. When once, however, we have become convinced of the credibility of their testimony, as we must undeniably be by the various arguments which I laid before you in my two last Discourses; when once the truth of the facts detailed in the Gospel has been admitted, we, who are here assembled, are as capable, as any men in any age, of sitting in judgment upon the great controversy, and determining whether the pretensions are justified by the actions of Jesus; whether he was really that Prophet "that should come, or we are to look for another;" whether we have already been freed from the dominion of sin and the powers of darkness, or are still liable to the sentence of heavenly condemnation, and must look for

redemption, only through the merits of a greater and more worthy Saviour.

But further, it is extremely necessary, not only to be assured of the reality, but also to distinguish with accuracy that particular portion of the whole burthen of Christianity, which the miracles of our Lord, when considered simply as miracles, were intended and calculated to bear; neither attributing too much nor too little to their power—not too much, by maintaining them to be alone sufficient to convince us that “Jesus was the Christ”—not too little, in excluding them from any influence at all, and attributing every thing either to the prophecies or the doctrines of Scripture. To point out this relative importance of our Saviour’s *works*, shall, therefore, be the object of the present Discourse; and may God Almighty bless its weakness.

Under the character of the Messiah, as applied to Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary, are comprehended these two particulars; first, that he was *a* prophet, and secondly, that he was *the* prophet; first, that he was a prophet sent from God, and secondly, that he was that special and predicted prophet, whose coming had been promised in the law, and whose doctrines and actions, whose sufferings and circumstances,

the holy men of old had so accurately described.

For a proof of the former of these propositions—that he was a **PROPHET** sent from God—our Saviour refers, in the words of my text, to a consideration of the works which the Father had given him to accomplish. “The same works that I do,” says he, “bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.” Nor is this a solitary instance. He uses the same argument upon a variety of occasions and in numerous other passages. Take the following as an example. When the Jews, exasperated by his repeated and explicit claims to a divine commission, took up stones to cast at him, for what they conceived to be his blasphemy, in making himself the Son of God, and therefore equal with God, the only way in which he attempted to defend himself was by a recapitulation of what he had done. “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do—though ye believe not me—believe the works.”* Such also appears to have been the general idea prevalent among the Jews. For when Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, and one, who, as a Pharisee and a teacher in Israel, was, of course, intimately acquainted with the doctrines of his church and

* John x. 37, 38.

the opinions of his countrymen, came to Jesus by night, he said unto him, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; because no man can do the miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."* Lastly, we find the Apostles, in justification of their faith, every where preaching Jesus of Nazareth, as "a man approved of God, by miracles, and signs, and wonders, which he did in the presence of all the people."†

So much I have said, to shew the sense which our Saviour and the sacred writers themselves entertained of the proper application and power of miracles in the establishment of the Christian religion. They held them to be proofs of the divine authority of Jesus; that he was a prophet commissioned and approved by God. And so much may serve, at the same time, to mark the flagrant ignorance or incorrectness of Rousseau, when he asserts, that Jesus laid the whole stress of his divine authority upon the doctrines which he preached, and never referred to the wonders which he wrought, as the signs and evidences of his being a heavenly Messenger; but wrought them only from motives of general benevolence to the afflicted, or of particular kindness to his friends. 'Tis true, that when, in the

* John iii. 2.

† Acts ii. 22.

Gospel “a wicked and adulterous generation seeketh a sign,” we read, in the answer of our Lord, that “no sign shall be given unto them.”* But why? Because they *were* “a wicked and adulterous generation,” and threw the tempting question in his way, with notions as sensual, and from motives as unrighteous as themselves. Therefore did he refuse to gratify their request, lest he might seem to countenance their unreasonable desires, or give currency to their erroneous opinions upon his character, as a temporal prince. But when the Baptist, with humbler and correcter views, represented his natural difficulties, without presumptuously prescribing the mode of their solution, Jesus both willingly wrought and specially referred to his miracles. “In that same hour, he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.” Then answering, he said unto them, “Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard.” But it is needless to enter into any further multiplication of testimonies upon a point so clear. Let us now pass on to the more arduous and important task of demonstrating, by an inquiry into the merits and tendency of our Saviour’s works, that the opinion he held upon

* Matt. xii. 39.

their efficacy was true, that they do indeed establish the very thing of which they are brought forward as proofs, and confirm, beyond the reach of controversy, that Jesus was one of the messengers of the God of heaven.

In the first place, then, the works of our Saviour were works of wonder, widely different, and far superior to those which the uniform experience of the world has taught us to consider as lying within the range of those powers which belong to uninspired and unassisted men. In the second place, they were appealed to, by our Saviour, in support of a particular system of doctrines and precepts. They are consequently possessed of all those qualifications and attributes which are required in order to prove, that he was both aided and approved by some Being superior to man.

In the creation-and preservation of the world—in the voice which first called forth matter into existence from the barren regions of infinite space—in the hand which formed that matter into this earthly frame upon which we live, then clothed it with beauties, and filled it with the various orders of animate and inanimate objects; in all these things we perceive something more than the feebleness of a human voice, or of a

human hand, and no one has ever yet seriously directed his views to the works of nature, without having learnt to confess that they are the works of God. As therefore in the revolution of years, in the recurrence of seasons, and the constant and unvaried succession of day and night, we acknowledge the traces of a great eternal, understanding God; so were the regularity of that system to be broken, were night to take the place of day, the sun to be darkened in his course, or the moon to be turned into blood, we should all fall down with trembling before the terrors of the Lord, and immediately perceive that such things could be produced only by the immediate operation, or the tacit permission of that Infinite Power, without whose permission or operation, nothing can either be changed or established.

Exactly of this character were the wonderful works of our Saviour. The usual course of things is, that men should live, suffer disease, then die and moulder into dust; and it is not more impossible for the feeble and unassisted efforts of man to create a new system of worlds or a new order of beings, than it is to recal the spirit which has once returned unto the God that gave it. Yet did our Saviour recal those spirits by the simple authority of his word. In the beginning of the creation the Almighty said,

“ Let the earth be,” and the earth was. In the beginning of the Gospel, Christ said, “ Awake thou that sleepest,” and he that slept in death awoke. Again, the cure of diseases is usually preceded by the application of those remedies whose general consequences have been long and carefully observed. Yet were the healings of our Saviour preceded only by circumstances of all others apparently the most inadequate, by the mere energy of his voice, or the mere application of his touch ; and whilst the restoration to health, under the mildest maladies, and with the most skilful treatment, is commonly slow and progressive, and many times uncertain and incomplete, it was, in the instances before us, almost universally immediate and perfect. Thus in all that the Lord did there was ever something remarkable, ever something above the reach of human reason and of mortal strength. Since, then, the wisdom of Providence has ordained and continued an order of things, which the unassisted weakness of man is evidently unable to alter, the works of Christ being different from that order, must be ascribed to the co-operating influence of some intelligent Being who is much more powerful than the sons of Adam. For, as he, who was restored to sight, forcibly observed, “ since the world began was it not heard that any *man* opened the eyes of one that was born blind.”

The uniform experience of the world is not to be urged against the credibility of the fact itself, but against the notion of that fact being produced by the efforts of an unaided man.

But we should be far from justifying in its entire extent the conclusion which our Saviour deduced from his miracles, did we stop short in our inquiries here. There are a variety of the more unusual operations in nature, which are far beyond the ability of human wisdom and of human exertion to accomplish, and which must therefore have some agent different from man; yet these are never considered as conferring any divine authority upon those doctrines which may happen to be preached in the countries and at the time in which they take place. They are regarded as accidental concurrences, rather than as designed coincidences. We must prove, therefore, that the works of Christ are not only visible demonstrations of the interference, but positive marks also of the approbation of some superior Being. That this is really the case is, however, sufficiently plain. The interference, when applied to the miracles of the Gospel, implies, of necessity, the approbation of that superior Being by whose finger they were wrought. For our Saviour not only worked such wonders as would bear the very strictest examination, but he worked

them also in defence of his claims to a particular character, and in support of a religion which he declared to be sanctioned and revealed by Heaven as best suited to the fallen wretchedness of man. He worked them to confirm the faith of his followers. He pointed to them as the signs and seals of his commission, and as signs and seals they never failed to follow his appeal to them. He never called but the spirits obeyed. He never spake, but the deaf and the dead heard. He never touched, but diseases fled, the blind saw, the lame leaped, and the lepers were cleansed. But it is most unnatural to suppose that any one would support a system in opposition to his most favourite wishes, contrary to his best interests, and to the inevitable ruin of his own kingdom. Had not the cause, therefore, in which our Lord was engaged, been approved by that Being by whom he was honoured with the testimony of miracles, these things would not have been so. His word would not always have been with power. There would have been a point at which his enchantments, like those of the magicians in Egypt, would have stopped; and he would frequently, like other impostors, in his own days, and under similar circumstances, have been unable to perform what he had promised, and thus become an object of hatred and contempt to his followers, instead of a stone of stumbling and

a rock of offence to his enemies,—In all that he did, therefore, our Saviour must have been both assisted and favoured, cherished and beloved, by some superior Being, and the only remaining question in this stage of the argument is, whether it was God or Satan, an Angel of light or a Spirit of darkness, which thus bare witness to his doctrines.

This, however, is a point most easy to be decided; Christ himself having furnished us with an observation upon the subject, which nothing but the most hardened infidelity can resist. I speak this, of course, as a believer in the Gospel: but, abstracted from its authority, the argument itself would appear to be irresistible. Our Lord had been inwardly accused by the Pharisees of casting out devils, by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. But “Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself, how shall then his kingdom stand?”* Admitting then the possibility of evil spirits being permitted by the Almighty to work real miracles for the delusion of mankind (for it is by his permission only that they can do any thing, and if

* Matt. xii. 25.

the miracles be not wrought for the delusion of mankind, it is a matter of little consequence by whom they are wrought), still the nature of the Gospel miracles exonerates them from every suspicion of being derived from such a source, or directed to such an end. They are all of them works of mercy as well as wonder, benevolent in their motives and beneficial in their effects; tending in every instance to relieve or remove the miseries of man. The deserted horrors of demoniacal madness, the agonies of convulsion, the foam of epilepsy, the burnings of fever, the fallings of faintness, and the corruption of death; the tears of the widow, the afflictions of the father, the speechlessness of the dumb, the sightlessness of the blind, and the helplessness of the decrepit from their mother's womb—all the sad destinies of man experienced, in their turn, from the Son of Mary, an alleviation of their woes.—The miracles of Jesus were the tenderest mercies of the most tender and compassionate of all human beings (that is a testimony borne to him even by his adversaries), who mightily humbled himself to lift up the heavy hand of suffering from them that were bowed down under their griefs, and, in more than one sense, took upon his own shoulders the burthen of our sorrows and the load of our infirmities. Search as strictly as you will, and you will find but two instances recorded in the

New Testament—the blasting of the fig-tree and the transferring of the legion of devils into the herd of swine—which bear even the appearance of being inconsistent with the most perfect purity and goodness; and in both of these the moral or the doctrinal lesson imprinted upon the minds of men in all ages of the world, is infinitely more than a sufficient balance for any individual loss which might be sustained. How then can we suppose that Satan, who is described to us in the blackest characters, as going about and seeking whom he may devour (and such must be the moral depravity of his occupation, if he have the power so to do)—that he who was a murderer from the beginning, should yet become the willing instrument of communicating so many blessings to the creatures of that God whose holiness he hates, and at whose power he trembles. How should he contribute to break the head of the serpent, when he must have known that in return he would be permitted only to bruise the heel of his destroyer—to gain a few victims for the everlasting burnings of remorse, and a few unbelieving captives for the chains of intellectual darkness, at the expense of his own horrible and eternal ruin?

Suppose, however, for a moment, that the devil, as a liar, should wish by real and beneficent

miracles to delude mankind, still, as the father of lies, he would never set the seal of his power to truth—never become the author of a system of righteousness, or attempt to establish a religion which would inevitably lead its followers to the sources of their best and only real happiness, even on earth. Yet such, whether a delusion or not, is the religion of the Gospel—a religion, which unites in itself and reflects back to the generations of men, all the scattered rays of moral wisdom; which brings into one view the various precepts of piety and goodness, defines, whilst it extends, the limits of our duty, and rejecting all that is false, embraces all that is just, in the writings of every age and nation since the world began. Christianity too is the only religion which communicates any satisfactory remedy for the misery of a sinner's despair, by establishing in his heart a well-grounded assurance of his Maker's mercy and his Maker's pardon for the past; whilst it strictly enjoins him at the same time to be careful of his future life, to forgive his enemies in return, and, carrying the principle of purity and caution into the minutest actions of his being, to cleanse his very thoughts from pollution, and to abstain, as he fears the judgment of God, from every idle word and every inconsiderate expression. We cannot, therefore, by any inconsistency, reconcile it to reason, that an evil spirit, whose mouth is full

of cursing and bitterness, should yet be content to teach the words of humility, and holiness, and benevolence—unless, indeed, like the prophet Balaam, with the strongest desire of cursing in his heart, his wishes and his works had been turned into a blessing upon Israel.

But, be the religion we profess what it may, the moral character of the meek, the holy, the harmless, the undefiled Jesus could never be a fit or natural favourite with the enemy of mankind. To become the proper instrument of the powers of hell, requires all those qualities which so often mark the hero of women's imaginations, and the conqueror of the liberties of men, active courage and a daring and relentless ambition. With neither of these qualities, however, do we meet in the evangelical picture of the awful loveliness of our Saviour's mind. In fortitude, indeed, in passive courage, in bearing, and in forbearing, he was most exemplary; but his only ambition was the desire of doing what we may be convinced, by independent reasoning upon natural principles, was the will of his Heavenly Father. To that Heavenly Father, therefore, we must look for the origin of the superior power by which he was supported and approved. For we have not been uselessly engaged in showing the absurdity of that opinion which refers the miracles of our Lord

to the voluntary agency and co-operation of some wicked spirit. The world may be divided between two masters, the Lords of mental light and darkness, and of moral good and evil; and whoever can be fairly proved *not* to be the disciple of the one, may be safely concluded to be the friend of the other.

The result of the whole, then, is this. The many wonderful works which Jesus performed were visible demonstrations that he was aided and favoured by *some* superior power, whilst the merciful nature and benevolent tendency of his works, as plainly declare that superior power to have been of God. This is still further confirmed to us by the mild and benevolent spirit of his religion, and the bright and unsullied purity of his life. He was, of course, fully justified in asserting, "that the same works which he did bore witness of him, that the father had sent him;" for, except the Father had been with him, as man he could not have done such miracles.

As yet we have only shewn that Jesus was *a* prophet sent from God. That he was *the* Prophet, the Messiah of the scriptures, is a proposition which is almost untouched, and must be made to rest upon a different foundation, in a future discourse. In the mean time, however, and,

before I insist upon those practical considerations which are furnished by the argument, even in its present imperfect state, I would just notice the falsehood of another of the assertions, and the futility of another of the reasonings, of Rousseau.

In a former Discourse I observed that the wonderful works of our Saviour have been so strongly testified by the Evangelists as to leave no possible doubt with regard to their actual occurrence; so that if we will hesitate at all, we can hesitate only upon the special interposition of the arm of the Almighty for their production. It is upon this very ground that the citizen of Geneva has taken up the question, and reasoned against the certainty of the Christian miracles. A miracle he defines to be an exception to the laws of nature. The reality of a miracle, therefore, he holds it impossible for man to ascertain, because since man cannot possibly ascertain what the laws of nature are, so neither can he pretend to determine whether and when there has been a deviation from those laws. A savage would count that to be a miracle which a philosopher would perceive to be no more than the necessary result of certain operations in nature, and according to certain laws. Hence a philosopher might, in an unenlightened nation, have the power to prove himself to be a prophet of God, though preaching only the

wise deductions of his own holy thoughts, and confirming them only through the performance of some extraordinary experiments by his scientific skill.

The fallacy lies in the generality of this reasoning. Be it that we know not universally what the laws of nature are; yet this we do know, that there are certain events so different from the usual results of the laws of nature, when applied only by the knowledge or power of man, that we may affirm, as far as we can affirm any thing, that those events are not the result of those laws, when so applied. In such cases we may safely infer, that there has been the special interference of superior powers, and in such a description we must necessarily include the miracles of the Gospel, the giving of sight unto the blind by a touch, and the giving of feet unto the lame by a word.

Again: it may be perfectly true that, if the agent of a wonderful work be either superior in power or in knowledge to ourselves, we cannot clearly determine, in every instance, whether the wonders he has performed be the result of a miraculous or philosophical combination of causes. A miracle, therefore, that it may become a satisfactory proof of the religion for which it is wrought, must be distinctly perceived to have been above the natural power and knowledge of the agent to

produce. And such were the miracles of Jesus. And herein lieth the wisdom of God, in making him to be born in a situation of life, where he could learn none of the secrets of science, and to have selected his companions and witnesses from amongst those of a like lowly rank and information with himself, men who were at the same time the most capable of judging of his powers, and the most incapable of assisting him in any deceit.

Thou art inexcusable, then, O man, whosoever thou art, that hearest the things that are written in the Gospel, and believest not in the heavenly authority of him by whom they were propounded. Still more inexcusable art thou, O man, that hearest and believest the things that are written in the Gospel, and doest not according thereto. For how can we dare, or even desire to disobey those precepts which bear upon them the mark and stamp of divinity, which have been sanctioned by the signs of divine power, and the seal of divine approbation? The Pharisees had indeed an opportunity of becoming spectators of those evidences of our Saviour's mission, of which we can only read in the testimony of his followers; and upon this difference, we may, perhaps, presume to lay the grounds of our defence. We may think that had we seen the blessed Jesus with our bodily eyes; had he preached in our streets and

performed his wonders upon our children, as he did upon those of Jerusalem, we should not have turned away from the light, but at once have become faithful and obedient disciples. But we should remember that it is the certainty of the Christian miracles, and not the means by which we arrive at that certainty, which forms the substantial proof of the divinity of the Christian religion, upon which divinity one of its principal titles to our obedience rests. As, therefore, our Saviour pronounced that it should be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for the faithless cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida, so may we declare, that it shall be more tolerable for the faithless cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida, in that day, than for those faithful Christians, in any age, or in any country, who believe without being converted from the error of their ways. The evidence of the senses is not stronger, ought not to be more convincing, than the evidence of the understanding. The eye of the mind may see as clearly, and judge as correctly, as the eye of the body; and if we repent not at the preaching of the Apostles and Evangelists, neither should we repent, though we should see one raised from the dead. Suppose indeed one of the very strongest of all possible cases. Suppose that for the satisfaction of some half-wavering, half-repentant sinner, who might have the pre-

sumption to claim a particular interposition in his favour, God should be pleased to interrupt the order of his providence and give a sensible demonstration of the indispensable necessity of Gospel obedience. Suppose that this sacred temple were to be chosen by the Almighty as the seat of his immediate presence—that he should appear in all the terrors of his power upon the altar, and there utter in a voice of thunder from the clouds of his glory and majesty, those awful and affecting words of Scripture, “Jerusalem is in adversity with her children. If ye repent not, ye shall all likewise perish.” Such a scene we may think would leave an impression upon the brain, that we should carry with us through age unto the grave. All the fascinations of vice, we may imagine, and all the vanities of the world would vanish and fade away before the remembrance of its wonders; and we should all become, what we are called upon to be, devoted to the service of man and our Maker; and we should all study to reap all the benefits by fulfilling all the conditions of the Gospel scheme of salvation. Oh, my brethren, I beseech you not to form so flattering a judgment. Answer not even for your own hearts, for the heart of man is deceitful above all things; but turn to the Bible (I speak as to believers), and there learn the wisdom by reading the answer of experience. Such a scene has been

represented before human eyes and upon the theatre of the world. God did once virtually appear in the splendor of his greatness. He spake, from the Shechinah of his glory, to the Israelites upon Mount Sinai, and they felt all that men could and must feel upon such an occasion. They were humbled by the greatness of their fear. They trembled before the Lord their God. They fell down before him, and besought him that he would speak to them no more in his might, but only through the mouth of his prophet Moses, to whose words they vowed an entire and an everlasting obedience. Yet how soon they forgot their promises—how soon the traces of the scene faded from their imagination, their murmurings, and sufferings, their crimes and punishments in the wilderness too sufficiently and sadly declare. It is a truth, that the proofs derived from the senses are never of so lasting a nature as those which apply to the understanding; for whilst the former dwindle away through forgetfulness, the latter acquire new force from time and examination. And such are the proofs of the truth and divinity of our religion, which leave us, therefore, no fair excuse for disobedience to its precepts. The things recorded in the Gospel speak to the mind and to the heart. Let us then be thankful for what we have and not be vainly or sinfully curious about what we have not, and about what, perhaps,

ought not to be granted to us. One day or other we shall all behold the majesty of God, but it will only be when the hour of our trial is over, when the period for judgment is at hand, and we are about to enter upon an eternity of happiness or misery. Knowing then the terrors of the Lord, and seeing that we have been timely called into his vineyard, we have no justifiable cause for standing wilfully idle. Whilst it is yet day, therefore, let us be Christians in deed and in truth; for "the night cometh, when no man can work."

DISCOURSE VI.

2 TIM. chap. iii. ver. 16.

“ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”

HAD the prophet Jesus, like the impostor Mahomet, retired to the caverns of some solitary mountain, and meditating in secret upon the sacred object of his ministry come forth with a written Gospel for the instruction of mankind, the evidence for Christianity would have assumed a very different character from that which it now bears, and have become much more simple, though not more satisfactory, than it appears under the present and more complicated circumstances of the case. Had our Saviour recorded with his own infallible pen the doctrines of his holy religion and the transactions of his benevolent life—his merciful miracles and his wonderful predictions; and had he delivered the original document to his disciples at his death,

as the fountain from which all their future preaching was to be drawn, and the only oracle to which they were to refer for an illustration of the principles and a proof of the divine origin of Christianity—it would seem as if in that case nothing more would have been requisite to enable us to judge with certainty upon the truth or falsehood of the pretensions of Jesus, than this—that the Apostles should have borne unequivocal testimony to the genuineness of the book and the authenticity of its contents, and confirmed that testimony by their sufferings and death. For, in that case, if from the contents of the book the author could be proved to have been a prophet of God, the inspiration of the book itself as the production of a prophet would follow as a matter of course, and all its contents become infallibly true. But it has pleased the Almighty in his wisdom, that the information we possess with regard to the actions and doctrines of our Lord, should be transmitted down to posterity in a manner which in its nature and operation is altogether different from this. It is now universally admitted that the divine Author of our religion himself wrote nothing—that nothing concerning either his preaching or his proceedings was written by others during his life, and that those memorials which we possess and revere as the veritable and sure relations of his

immediate and constant followers, were not one of them composed until a period of several years had elapsed from the death of that individual whose words and works they so minutely and regularly detail. The change which this fact makes in the proofs necessary to establish the truth and divinity of the religion of the Gospel, and the manner in which those necessary proofs have been supplied, are what I shall now proceed to lay before you, with a view of ultimately bringing into notice the inspiration of the writers of the New Testament. The several points I shall consider in their order, are, the utility of such inspiration, the manner in which its reality may be demonstrated, and the period at which such a demonstration should be introduced.

I. First of all, then, let us inquire into those reasons which made it requisite that the Apostles and Evangelists should be guided or superintended by the influence of the divine Spirit in the composition of their works.

The leading and most wonderful features of the life of Christ, and the general and most important principles of his religion, are such as could never have been obliterated from the tablets of mortal memory. However weak the mind, however young the spectator, however long his

life, he must have ceased to be, or to be a man, ere he could cease to muse upon the precepts, to repeat the works, and remember the resurrection of his Lord. That Jesus had pronounced himself to be the promised Messiah of the Jews, he that had ears to hear must have heard and could never forget. That in confirmation of these pretensions Jesus had wrought many miracles, and none of a doubtful character or an unholy tendency, he that had eyes to see must have seen and perceived. That neither in his private nor in his public life had his conduct or discourses been distinguished by any thing but an attention to the great ends of piety and morality, he that had a heart to understand must necessarily have comprehended; and every faculty of thought and recollection must have perished, before those important circumstances had lost their impression upon his mind. At whatever period, therefore, of the lives of the writers the several books of the New Testament were composed, as the writers (this we have already proved) were both credible witnesses in point of character, and competent witnesses in point of knowledge, those books may be fairly considered, when considered merely as human testimony, merely as the testimony of honest and observing men, to contain a faithful outline and a correct general statement of the life

and doctrines, the miracles and predictions of Jesus.

But it so happens that the Gospels contain a great deal more than the bare outline of the proceedings and pretensions of our Lord. They are not indeed to be looked upon as the full and perfect relations of every accident which befel him, and every incident in which he participated; neither do they recount his discourses and doings in an exact and undeviating order of chronology. They expressly renounce their claims to be considered in this light, and tell us, that there are many other signs and things which Jesus did, and which are not written in their books. This then is allowed, that the Gospels are not complete histories of the founder of Christianity, and of all and each of his works. But yet in the majority of those instances in which they do enter upon any of his deeds and sayings, they take it up in detail. They deal frequently in mere general expressions, but more usually relate whatever they undertake to write upon, with minuteness and accuracy of delineation, and with the addition of all the various circumstances of time, of person, and of place. Now these circumstances of time, of person, and of place, are precisely those points in which the human memory the earliest and most commonly fails, nor can the best-trained

understanding preserve for a series of years the distinct recollection of all the concomitant circumstances of a multitude of different but resembling facts. It would exceed the powers of memory in the wisest of unassisted men thus for a series of years to keep separate what was so much alike; and however frequently the particulars might be repeated, yet would there be a constant and unavoidable tendency, were it only from the mere act of repetition, to mingle and confound those points in which the similarity was strongest. But the Apostles, instead of being the wisest of unassisted men, were altogether undisciplined in the schools of philosophy and learning. They were poor and uneducated fishermen. Whatever, therefore, may have been their honesty and sincerity, and however strong their memory, we cannot be justified in relying upon all their details as absolutely and infallibly correct, unless we can show that they wrote in some measure under the assisting influence of divine inspiration; for we are ignorant of the existence of any original and authentic document from which they could copy, and they wrote too long after the events which they relate, to have retained, if uninspired, so clear and circumstantial a remembrance. The Gospels, as mere human compositions, may be reasoned upon as generally and substantially true, but an absolute

and undeviating accuracy can spring only from a source superior to the errors of mortality.

The first reason, then, for the inspiration of the Apostles is to be derived from its utility in confirming their infallibility as historians. A second may be drawn from its necessity in establishing their character as the authorised interpreters of ancient prophecy, and the authorised expounders of the doctrines of Christianity.

“ Know this first of all,” says the Apostle St. Peter,* “ that no prophecy is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” The will of man, therefore, and the mere critical conclusions of private individuals, however plausible, can never be exalted into an authorized and infallible guide in the exposition or application of any difficult and doubtful prediction. Where the intention of the Holy Ghost has been plainly revealed, where, as in the prefiguration of Cyrus or of Josiah, the name and the actions to which the prophecy refers are directly and distinctly pointed out in language such as prevails in the common intercourse of life, there the

* 2 Pet. i. 20, 21.

human and unassisted understanding of the commentator may be permitted to determine the mind of the Spirit. But where the designation is incidental and dark, it requires something more than the deductions of unaided reason to stamp an interpretation with the seal of an absolute authority from which there is no appeal; and we can only be assured beyond the possibility of mistake, that the will of God, as it is signified to us in the obscurer and more ambiguous predictions of holy Writ, has been correctly deduced, when the interpretation as well as the words proceed from a holy man of God; or where the ambiguity and obscurity are removed by the event. For, says the Apostle St. Paul,* “as no man knoweth the things of a man, save the Spirit of a man that is in him, even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God;” and upon this ground he claims expressly for himself the possession of “the Spirit, which is of God; that he might know the things which are freely given unto us of God.” “God,” he declares, “hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God;” an argument which may be applied alike to the deep things of doctrine and the deep things of prophecy, and bears equally upon the character of

* 1 Cor. ii. 10—12.

the Apostles as infallible expounders of the principles of the New, and authoritative interpreters of the predictions of the Old, Testament. Nay, it applies to them with more than common force, when we reflect upon their unlearned character as fishermen, and their perverted and erroneous opinions as Jews. Under such circumstances, their authority as mere men in the interpretations of prophecy, and the explication of doctrine falls too low to permit any one to embrace their creed merely upon the strength of their own unconfirmed and uninspired assertions. The demonstrations of power, and the possession of the Spirit, are what alone can justify an entire and unreserved deference to their declarations.

2. From the preceding observations it appears that the proper period for introducing a proof of the inspiration of the Apostles into a systematic inquiry into the truth of Christianity, is, when any question arises which involves, as a previously established fact, their unerring and universal accuracy as historians, or their absolute and infallible authority as teachers, both of which depend upon their being in possession of the Spirit. Our object therefore must be, to determine what is the first branch of Christian evidence which involves in its establishment these two important considerations.

Now, it is evident, that the character of our Saviour's miracles, the tendency of his doctrines, and the colour of his life, when regarded in a moral and physical point of view, are what must decide upon the justice of his claims to be admitted as *a* prophet; as one of those to whom the counsels of the Almighty upon the duties and doctrines of man were communicated. If the miracles he performed were beyond the strength of any human arm, if his doctrines were conducive at once to the peace and holiness of the world, and if his life corresponded in all its parts with the majesty of his works and the purity of his words, then may we safely rank him amongst the prophets of the Most High: and that these things were so, we may be sufficiently assured by the testimony of the Evangelists, when considered only as human and uninspired witnesses, giving their evidence with integrity and to the best of their recollection. For we cannot but perceive from their own account of their feelings and frequent doubts, that they looked with such a careful and jealous eye upon all the proceedings of our Lord, that had any thing inconsistent with the interests of piety or morality escaped his lips, or had his performances fallen short of his promises or their expectations, they would have all forsaken him and fled, with the same readiness with which they afterwards deserted his cause, when shocked

by what appeared to them to be the scandal of his crucifixion and death. That they have not recorded any thing which offended their moral feelings, nor any miracle which struck them as equivocal or improper, is therefore a satisfactory proof that none such ever occurred; and when they declare that their Master was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; and that he healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, and raised the dead, we are bound implicitly to acquiesce in those general declarations, because they are points which their integrity would never falsify and their memory could never forget. From the substantial truths of the Gospels, therefore, though considered only as human compositions, and though written long after the events which they record, we may clearly establish the divine commission of Jesus to reveal the will of God to man, without insisting upon their universal correctness in every circumstance.

But when, from an endeavour to demonstrate that Jesus was *a* prophet of God, we proceed to shew that he was also the predicted prophet of the older covenant, it is plain that we must justify our opinion by a comparison of all the actions and events of his life, with the prophecies which describe the character of the Messiah; and it is equally plain that for this purpose we require

something more than a general acquaintance with his history. The most circumstantial and accurate accounts are necessary before we can even institute the comparison, and it seems highly advantageous, if not essential, to the certainty of our conclusion, that the agreement between the predictions and their fulfilment should, in every difficult and doubtful case, be confirmed to us by the authority of those who could not possibly be deceived. Now this accuracy and this authority, as we have already declared, can proceed only from the correcting and enlightening influence of the Spirit of God. It would appear, therefore, to be particularly expedient, if not absolutely necessary to the firmness of our reasoning, that we should enter upon the proof of the inspiration of the Apostles before we attempt to shew that the prophet Jesus was the Messiah of the Jews.

3. The proper manner in which the inspiration of the Apostles may be demonstrated is the next point of our inquiry, and the fact of their being thus supernaturally assisted may be established from various sources, but first from the promises of Jesus himself.

Of all the communications which are made to us by another, those usually leave the strongest and most lasting impression upon the mind, which

relate personally to ourselves. Those more especially are retained in the memory which contain some promise of future benefit; but the deepest and longest recollection is attached to such promises as are intended to relieve us from some present disadvantage, without specifying the precise nature of the relief to be afforded. In this latter case the uncertainty of what we have to expect is added to the anxiety for the fulfilment, and we retain not only the substance, but the very words which have been spoken. Such were the promises of the Spirit by which our Saviour endeavoured with such earnest and affectionate frequency to prepare the minds of his followers for the day of affliction in which he himself should be taken away. I will not leave you comfortless, were the words of his consolation, but I will pray the Father, and he will send you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth. "He will lead you into all truth," and "teach you all things" requisite for your success in the business of propagating the Gospel. He shall "bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you," and "abide with you for ever," thus enabling you, "to bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning."* The precise import of these expressions the Apostles did undoubtedly not at the moment understand,

* John xiv. 16, 18, 26.

nor were they fully aware of their import until their meaning was completely developed by the cross and the cloven tongues of fire. But this very obscurity would serve only the more forcibly to fix the words in their memory; whilst at the same time it was impossible for them not to gather from the friendly solemnity of the language, both the fear of some impending calamity and the hope of some future assistance. The testimony, therefore, of the Apostles merely as men of fidelity and truth, is sufficient to assure us that these declarations with regard to the Spirit were made to them by Jesus, and the very same testimony, as we have already shewn, is sufficient also to convince us that Jesus was a prophet of God. The very fact, therefore, that these promises of inspiration were made by Jesus, is a proof that such inspiration was actually communicated to the Apostles. For he was a prophet, and never yet did the word of a divine prophet fail in the due accomplishment of its purpose.

We have another proof of the inspiration of the Apostles, in those various assertions that they were so inspired which are still to be found in their writings. They declare many things in the religion which they teach, to have been revealed to them by the Spirit, “and I think also that I have the Spirit of God,” says

St. Paul.* So far, therefore, as the declarations of honest men who confirmed their sincerity by their sufferings and death are to be admitted as true, and so far as it is impossible for the Apostles to have been deceived with regard to their possession of spiritual aid, so far also are we bound to believe them upon this point, and to admit, upon the ground of their own testimony alone, that they were really and divinely assisted in propagating the religion they had embraced.

This inspiration of the Apostles is still farther confirmed by the testimony which was borne by the early Christians to their possession of miraculous powers, and by the appeal which they themselves have made to the exercise of such powers, as the infallible evidences of the fidelity of their statements, and the authority of their teaching—an appeal which, if false, it would have been something more than idle to have made, when the meanest individual had the power of contradicting its truth.

But the most striking, and what, in these later generations, we are apt, perhaps not unjustly, to consider as the most satisfactory proof of the inspiration of the Apostles of our Lord, is, the fulfilment of those various predictions which stand in

* 1 Cor. vii. 40.

the genuine pages of their writings, and which distinctly mark them out as belonging to the number of those “holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the holy Ghost.”

“It must needs be that offences come, but woe be to that man by whom the offence cometh,”* said our Saviour, at once to warn and to prepare his disciples against the future difficulties and corruptions of Christianity; and we shall find, upon examining into the subject of the Apostolic prophecies, that they are almost exclusively occupied in expounding this comprehensive foreboding, and giving a more precise and minute prefiguration of those sufferings and errors of Christians, of which their Master had given no more than a general intimation. Listen to the awful trumpets and break the sacred seals of the Revelation of St. John, and you will hear, no doubt, many sounds that fall with no distinct impression upon the ear, and read many a line whose sublime obscurity the understanding cannot penetrate. Darkness is upon the face of the prophetic creation, and the Spirit of God must move, ere it can be broken and dispersed, and we must either wait for some inspired interpreter to unravel its intricacy, or sit down in contented expectation for that period of blessedness in which the difficulties of Christianity

* Matt. xviii. 7.

shall be swallowed up in the glory of the second coming of our Lord, as the seeming inconsistencies of the Jewish scheme were illuminated by the brightness of his first. Yet, amidst all the thick darkness that surrounds the general mass of these revelations, there is still light enough upon a few of its elements to enable, and almost compel the understanding, to recognize their form and distinguish their nature. The sufferings of the early Saints, the double errors of Asia and of Europe, the locusts of Arabia and the spiritual fornication of Rome, are described to the life, and our eyes must be shut up in wilful blindness, and our ears be closed in a moral deafness to the prophet's voice, ere we can refuse to acknowledge that the apostacy of the East and the tyranny and idolatry of the West, have been as surely prefigured in the pages of God's books, as their effects have been fearfully felt in the annals of man's history. These things have been, and have been foretold, and in the same writing it is written, that for all these things God will bring the nations into judgment, and send out the angels of his anger into the earth, as a punishment for their infidelity, and their corruption of the truth. We ask, then, whether the vengeance of the Almighty hath not been abroad? Whether the first, or the second, or the third vial be past, or whether they are still pouring out their wrath, we may not be able to say; but truly the

world hath tasted of much of the bitterness of their contents. It hath drank deeply of blood, and of fire, and of pains, and of sores, and of all the plagues which God's servant proclaims against God's enemies: and where we can thus identify the general features of the scene, it matters little whether we be able to measure its proportions or no. Where we can trace the progress of the prophetic but unfinished drama by these infallible signs, it were idle to complain because we cannot as yet perceive the connexion, and explain the bearing of its mutual parts. It is the close of the whole which alone can expound the great object and scheme of the Almighty Framers, and we must wait in patience for the last and concluding act of triumph, to cast back a ray of its own light and glory upon all the intricacy and obscurity which has gone before.

Thus much have I said, to show how the spirit of a prophet did rest upon that beloved Apostle, who (if any comparison ought to be drawn) may be said perhaps to have left us the most valuable records of our Saviour's life. And now let us turn our eyes upon the writings of the great historian of the "man of sin."* Let us attend to his description of this son of perdition, as one who opposeth and exalteth himself above all those powers and

* 2 Thess. ii, compared with 1 Tim. iv.

principalities of the world whom the flattery and folly of man has called gods, and as sitting in the temple of God, showing himself that he is a god ; and, as the gods of the earth do lord it over their brethren, so claiming for himself a spiritual power and pre-eminence over God's heritage. Hear him elucidating the manner of the working of this "lawless one," and how he details his efforts to attain this lofty and ungodly majesty, as being accompanied with the "working of Satan, and with all power and signs and wonders of falsehood." Trace the minuteness with which he enumerates the doctrines of those seducing spirits who in the latter times were to turn many from the faith, by "speaking lies in hypocrisy, and forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats." Meditate upon all these things, compare them in all their parts, consider them under all their accompanying circumstances, and then say whether you can look to any other city, or any other power, than to the faded splendor and the spiritual ruler of Rome for their accomplishment. If there be any who have ventured to doubt upon the certainty of the application of these prophecies to Rome, it is only, I believe, because some have been too anxious to find her horrid form in every prophetic picture which has been delineated by the Apostle's pen. In their holy horror of the spiritual wickedness and

usurpations of Rome, some have been led to hold of her not only as the great, but the only Antichrist, and to behold her crimes alone in every description of wickedness with which the Scriptures abound, an extreme which has driven others to deny her resemblance to any of the multiplied portraits of error. An Antichrist she may be ; for we are taught by the Apostle that there are many Antichrists ; and in the looser interpretation of the term, every Church and individual who maintains doctrines the tendency of which is to injure the majesty of the Redeemer, may be regarded as not unworthy of the name. Yet we are taught by the same Apostle, that he only and truly is Antichrist, “ who denieth the Father and the Son,”* who violates the dignity of either, by denying their existence or attributes ; and refuses to acknowledge the intimacy of those mutual and eternal relations, which result from their respective possession of the parental and filial character. In this sense we are bound to confess that Rome and her votaries do not fall under the grievous condemnation denounced upon a renunciation of the first principles of the Gospel. But whilst we relieve her from this extremity of guilt, it would seem difficult for a calm and reflecting mind not to behold in the spiritual fornication of the mystic Babylon, and the various deformities of the man

* 1 John ii. 22.

of sin, the deeds and the decrees and the doctrines of the Papal power.

Thus have we examined the period and order in which the several portions of the New Testament were composed, and shown the manner in which that inspiration of the Apostolic writers, upon which their authority and infallibility depend, may be decisively proved. Why it should have pleased the Almighty to adopt this peculiar mode of recording the history and the doctrines of our religion, it is neither necessary for us to inquire, nor perhaps possible to determine. We know that the proofs necessary for the demonstration of the truth of our religion in this more complicated method of proceeding, have been fully supplied, and with this assurance it is our duty to rest satisfied, without presumptuously ascribing motives to the Infinite Mind. But there is one very important inference which may be drawn from the history of the formation of the New Testament, which it would be unwise, and is almost impossible for any one, however thoughtless, to overlook. It is this, that the lateness of the period, and the successive order in which its several parts were composed, afford a very strong presumption against their being the work of impostors. To understand this the better, it will be expedient to compare the origin of the

Koran with that of the Gospels and Epistles, and to show from the comparison, in what respects the suspicion which rests upon the former is altogether inapplicable to the latter. “When a great part of the life of Mahomet had been spent in preparatory meditation on the system he was about to establish, its chapters were dealt out slowly and separately during the long period of three-and-twenty years.* Thus the Koran was the work of a single individual labouring in secret upon a pre-conceived system of his own, and exerting the whole force of his understanding and imagination, to frame, if possible, its successive chapters into one harmonious whole. The various portions of the Christian volume on the other hand, though they also were slowly and separately produced, were yet produced in different countries and by different individuals, and under different circumstances; whilst, instead of containing only insulated parts of the Gospel scheme, each treatise will be found to reveal the entire outline of the religion of Jesus, and that outline to be uniformly the same. The Koran, again, was formed to be the model of that religion which was afterwards to be preached, and it was impossible, therefore, to say whether it did or did not contain a correct transcript of the original views and doctrines of its author. He might have changed his system

* White's Bampton Lectures.

during the progress of his labours, and it would have been out of the power of any to detect the alteration, which sprung up and was confined within the darkness of his own solitary cave, and the limits of his own creative mind. But the writings of the New Testament are the mere transcripts of what had been already both long and extensively promulgated by various teachers. It was therefore impossible for any deviation to have been made from the doctrines which had been originally and uniformly delivered, without affording an immediate and full opportunity of detection. Every Jew and every Christian could determine whether what he read in the writings did or did not correspond with the things which he had heard from the preaching of the Apostles. The very time and manner of the publication of the Gospels are, therefore, sufficient to persuade us that they contain a faithful outline of those actions and doctrines which were universally, and from the first, delivered to mankind as the doctrines and actions of Jesus Christ. There may be circumstantial variations, but they must have been substantially the same.

Now the whole of this advantage would in a great measure have been lost to the world, had there existed from the earliest period of the

preaching of the Apostles one single document to which they had all referred as the authentic record of the life of Christ, and the only authoritative repository of his doctrines. In that case we should have lost the evidence which is now afforded by the uniformity of the creeds of different Churches and the writings of different individuals. It would have been insinuated that the scheme of Christianity had been deliberately planned and steadily executed, and the original record would have been regarded as the product of art and imposture, adapting their means to a preconceived and maturely meditated end. But what says St. Paul ? “ Though I, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which I have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”* Of all the testimonies which man can give of his sincerity and confidence in the truth of what he teaches, this is the strongest and most unequivocal ; and it is the very language held out to us by the history of the successive composition of the books of the New Testament, at periods considerably subsequent to the death of Christ. Whilst we acknowledge, therefore, the difficulties arising from this fact, and perceive the additional complexity which it introduces into the details of the evidences of Christianity, let us at the same time

* Gal. i. 8.

be thankful for the additional strength which it gives to the fabric, and the broad and marked line of distinction which it draws between the presumptuous imposture of the deceiver of Arabia and the holy religion of the anointed Jesus.

DISCOURSE VII.

Acts, chap. xvii. ver. 3. latter part.

“ This Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.”

By the miraculous nature and benevolent tendency of his works, joined to the purity of his precepts and the blamelessness of his life, our Saviour vindicated, in a most satisfactory manner, his claims to the dignity of a divine commission. His works declared that the Father had sent him, and without pursuing our inquiries beyond this point, his religion becomes, upon the strength of this conclusion alone, most fully entitled to our gratitude and obedience. Jesus, however, aspired to something more than the simple character of a Messenger from Heaven. Moses had said unto the Fathers, “ A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me. Him shall ye hear.”* Arrayed in the

* Acts iii. 22.

authority of that Prophet, the Son of Mary appeared unto the world, and demanded, in consequence, a more than ordinary deference and attention to his commands. His religion he declared to be entitled to more than common acceptation, because it was the religion of one who in his nature and dignity was far superior to any common prophet. He assumed to himself the office and honours of the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed of God.

Pretensions of a character at once so grand and so peculiar could never have been established by any miracles, however certain or numerous or magnificent, when considered merely as miracles, that is, as effects contrary to our general experience of the agency of human strength and unassisted man, and as works, for the production of which the favour and interposition of the Deity were necessary. Many preachers of righteousness had appeared since the days of Moses, unto Israel—had fashioned their lives in strict conformity with their precepts, and performed many and mighty wonders in their support—had healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, raised the dead to life, and multiplied the food of man in a most astonishing manner, by a mere blessing pronounced from their lips. Yet were they none of them considered, even for a moment, or by the most

unthinking, as the Christ. Elisha had cured the Syrian Naaman of his leprosy, had restored her son to the woman of Shunem, and caused the widow's cruise to pour forth its oil in a stream of miraculous increase. All these things had Elisha done. He had prophesied, too, and his prophecies were fulfilled. He was like unto our Saviour in the nature of his works, and in the holiness of his doctrine and his life ; yet with all his power he was ranked only in the general class of prophets. He was numbered with Samuel and Elijah, those mighty men of God, but neither professed himself, nor was looked upon by others, to be the expected consolation of Israel. In the publicity, then, and in the mercy, and in the magnitude of his miracles ; in the reasonableness of his doctrines and the righteousness of his precepts ; in the godliness of his life, and in the clearness and certainty of his prophecies, though we may behold indisputable evidence that Jesus of Nazareth "was approved of God," yet can we not find in them, when considered without reference to the ancient predictions, any satisfactory proof that he was the Messiah of the Scriptures, and the looked-for of the Jews. Our confidence in that great fundamental article of our religion, must be derived from another source. The doctrines and miracles of the Gospel do indeed mutually confirm each other, and incontestibly show it to

have been one of the revelations of God ; but they do not demonstrate it also to have been that particular revelation which the Jews expected to be promulgated by the blessed Immanuel. That Jesus is the Christ, and that the Gospel is the revelation promised through the Christ, must be determined by considering whether he did and spoke and suffered those things which Christ ought to have done and spoken and suffered. What Christ ought to have done and spoken and suffered is predicted and detailed in the Books of the Old Testament ; and the genuineness and integrity of those books must be presumed to have been already and unequivocally established by the same arguments which have satisfied us of the credibility and inspiration of the Apostles and their writings : for in the writings of the Apostles the existing records of the Jewish Scriptures are assumed as the word of the inspiration of God, and referred to as the foundation of the Christian faith. If Jesus, therefore, be the Christ, he must have borne in his own person the distinguishing marks of Christ as displayed in the law of Moses, and in the writings of the holy men of old. A prophet greater than all the prophets which had gone before, his miracles declared him to be ; but his undoubted title to the peculiar honours and offices of the Messiah is founded upon his fulfilling all that was

written of him, and must, therefore, be shewn by a comparison of the events of his life with the words of the Jewish Scriptures, as explained to us by the inspired, and therefore authoritative, interpretations of his own Apostles.

The conclusion to which we have thus been led by a previous and accurate examination into the nature of the case, is confirmed to us by the uniform practice of the disciples of our Lord in their reasonings with the Jews, and by the decisive language of our Lord himself.

Philip converted to the Christian faith the treasurer of Candace, queen of Ethiopia, by “preaching unto him Jesus from the Scriptures,”* and explaining to him the strict connexion which subsists between the sufferings of our Lord and the mournful predictions uttered concerning his fate, so many centuries before, in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah; a passage, which is so sad, that it never can be read without being sensibly felt; and so convincing that it was not only effectual in the days and under the hands of those disciples who possessed so great a measure of the Holy Spirit, but has probably also made a deep impression upon every one who may

* Acts viii. 35.

have had the wisdom to consult it; and became, through the blessing of God, a principal instrument in turning from an evil heart of unbelief a nobleman who had continued through youth and manhood one of the most bitter and determined enemies of our religion.* St. Peter also preached Jesus Christ, testifying that “to him give all the prophets witness.”† And we learn from the same unerring source, the Acts of the Apostles, that a reference to the completion of the prophetic parts of the Old Testament, in the ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of our Saviour, was the general method employed in those primitive days, in propagating the Gospel as the religion of the Messiah, and was ever considered by impartial judges as satisfactory, if not irresistible, to those who agreed in the truth of the miracles of Jesus, and acknowledged him to have been a prophet sent from God. Apollos‡ mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing, from the Scriptures, that Jesus is Christ. It was moreover the manner, the common, if not the universal, custom of St. Paul,§ to reason in the synagogue out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Jesus must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead; that is, must needs have done those things which it was foretold that

* See Burnet's *Life of Lord Rochester*.

† Acts x. 43.

‡ Acts xviii. 28.

§ Acts xvii. 3.

the Messiah should do, and that, consequently, that Jesus whom he preached unto them was Christ. He took it for granted, that they confided in his testimony as to what Jesus of Nazareth had really done and suffered in support of his sincerity and claims, because his credibility, as a chosen witness and Apostle of that Jesus, was openly confirmed to their senses, by his possession and exercise of miraculous powers. He assumed it as a fact, that they believed our Lord to have been at any rate a divine prophet, and then shewing them the various things which the prophets had declared that the Messiah should do, he drew, from the fulfilment of those predictions in his person and character and life, the inevitable conclusion, that in the Son of Mary was to be found this child of promise.

But the strongest confirmation of the correctness of our views, as to the proper method of applying the fulfilment of prophecy to the defence of Christianity, is to be found in the evidence of our Saviour himself. Having first of all referred his unbelieving countrymen to a consideration of his works for a proof that the Father had sent him, our Lord afterwards commended them to an examination of the Scriptures, in order that they might learn the justice of his pretensions to the character of the Messiah.

“ Search the Scriptures,” says he, “ for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these be they which testify of me.”* The part of that evidence, however, upon which I would venture to lay the greatest stress, is the relation, which St. Luke† has so happily left us, of the conversation which Jesus held on the day of his resurrection with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. He overtook them sad and sorrowful, and communing together, in doubtful reasonings and dissatisfied conjectures upon the various events which had happened in Jerusalem. Upon one point they were both agreed. They both determined that Jesus of Nazareth was a prophet mighty in word and deed ; for they had seen and heard too much of the wonder of his workings upon the afflicted, and the gracious doctrines which fell from his mouth upon the poor, to permit them for a moment to turn away from their reliance upon his divine authority. But they had looked to him as something more than a simple prophet, however mighty, and they verily began to think that they had been disappointed in their views ; for the rumours which had reached them of his resurrection in the morning were but the slender and doubtful tidings of an event so strange and joyful that it could not be admitted without much hesitation and the severest scrutiny.

* John v. 39.

† Luke xxiv. 13—36.

They had trusted, as they said, that Jesus had been he which should have redeemed Israel; but their holy confidence had been miserably shaken, and almost dissipated, by the sudden calamity of his death. For they thought it impossible, that he whose kingdom was to be an everlasting kingdom, and whose throne was to be for ever and ever, should yet be delivered to his enemies, and by wicked hands be crucified and slain. Such, then, being the causes of their uncertainty, and finding that they acknowledged him as a divine prophet, and doubted only of his pretensions to be the Messiah, our Saviour entered upon the task of their conversion, not by any reference to his miracles or his doctrines, “but beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

Directed then in our views upon this subject, by him whose judgment was correct upon every subject, we also must shew from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.—We must do this in imitation of our blessed Lord, and we must do it for the same reason too; because those to whom we address our words are presumed, from the consideration of the arguments which have been already advanced, to have an implicit faith in the reality of his miracles, and in the perfection of his

religion, and in the holiness of his life, and, therefore, also, in the truth of his divine mission.

Here the arduous nature of the task we have undertaken, first and most forcibly strikes us. So various and innumerable are the references in the Old Testament, direct and implied, to the great bruiser of the serpent's head, that to detail them all would be an impossible attempt. It would only be to range the larger part of the law on one side, and compare it with the larger part of the Gospel on the other. Even to give a connected history of the gradual rise and progress of prophecy would far exceed the limits of any single Discourse. Nor would the difficulty be lessened by endeavouring, amidst such a multiplicity of proofs almost equally pertinent, to select the most commanding and useful. I shall therefore content myself with a few general remarks upon some of the most prominent and distinguishing features of those predictions which relate to the Messiah.

1. In addition to their number and variety, to which we have already alluded, the first point of view in which the prophecies respecting the Messiah become particularly worthy of our consideration, is from their express and unequivocal nature, and their universal reference to his life. They

relate to every period of the sojourning of that heavenly personage amongst men, and designate the events of each with a minute and almost historical exactness. They trace him from his cradle to his cross. The time, the place, the manner of his birth—the time, the place, the manner of his death and burial—the subsequent glories of his resurrection from the grave—his education and ministry—the grandeur of his royal descent—the meanness of his immediate parentage—the dignity of his employment—the lowliness of his outward circumstances—the righteousness of his life, and yet the hatred and contempt which should pursue his innocence and destroy his happiness—all these are pictured with such clearness of conception, and such descriptive accuracy of language, as no impostor, whose wisdom it is to dwell in generalities for ever, would have dared to use, and no enthusiast, whose ideas are always indistinctly conceived and vaguely expressed, would have had sufficient command over his understanding and feelings to adopt.

2. Our astonishment at the fulfilment, and our conviction of the divine origin of the prophecies, which relate to the person and character of the Messiah, will still be increased, if we remember that many of them are apparently inconsistent with each other, and many of them, even when

singly viewed, so different from the actions, that they never could have entered into the mind of an ordinary man.

The imagination of a volatile being might, perhaps, in some sportive moment, or in some fanciful mood, have sat down to trace the outlines of a character combining in itself every thing unheard or unthought of by man; but then this would be done only for a pleasing occupation during some vacant hour; for the amusement, but never for the instruction or direction of those to whom it was written: and still less would any one thus exert the creative powers of genius for the purpose of drawing down upon him the eyes of mankind as one of those that were commissioned to speak the words of soberness and solemnity from the Almighty. It would be as a poet and not as a prophet, that he would give unbridled utterance to the vague and unconnected strangeness of his thoughts. Yet of all the delineations of human character which have ever yet been formed in the fine phrensy of a poet's or a painter's brain, that which most completely deviates from the ordinary outline of a man, is the picture of the Messiah as it stands bodied forth to us by the firm and vigorous pencil of the prophets, in all the nakedness of its incomprehensible sublimity. It was possible for many a one among the children of Judah, to have been the

son; but tell me, how he could at the same time also have been the Lord of David? It was possible he might be of the seed of the woman; but how could he become the offspring of a virgin? He might be the chief corner-stone of the temple; but how also a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence? He was to be the desire of all nations; wherefore then is it said, that his own flesh and blood—men that were his brethren, and children, like himself, of the stock of Abraham—should close their eyes, and shut up their ears, and harden their hearts, so that they could neither see, nor hear, nor feel, that he was come to bless them? How came it to pass that the chosen of God was described as hated and rejected of God's peculiar people. Why should it please the Lord, the just and merciful Lord, to bruise him who had done no violence, neither was deceit found in his mouth? Why should the Holy One be numbered with the transgressors, or how could the Everlasting be cut off out of the land of the living? And though he thus made his grave with the wicked, yet how should he also make it with the rich, in his death? Or, lastly, by what strange fatality could his destruction become to him the source of eternal life, and because he had poured out his soul unto death, yet, for that very reason, have his days prolonged, and the pleasure of the Lord to prosper in his hand?*

* Isaiah, liii.

contrarieties which no one who wished to obtain credit for his knowledge of futurity would have ventured to predict, had he not been confident in his possession of the spirit of prophecy. Any single prophet who respected either his own veracity or the welfare of others—never would such a one, without inspiration, have spoken thus; and without inspiration a succession of writers, however wise, could never have entertained the thought. For had human penetration and ingenuity alone exerted themselves to the very utmost to endeavour to find out a character in whom these varieties might have been reconciled and accomplished, the labour could scarce ever have been expected to be crowned with success. He who was at the same time the Son of God and of Man, only did, and only could, unite in his own person such various attributes. The Father, therefore, by whose wisdom alone it was ordained, by whose power alone it could be effected, that the Son of God should become the Son of Man, is the only being to whom we can reasonably look for the author, either of the predictions or of their fulfilment.

3. I have remarked that no succession of prophets could ever have framed that series of prophecies which relates to the Messiah by the force of their own unassisted genius or invention; and

this becomes another strong point in the illustration of their fulfilment in Jesus.

It is extremely difficult to form an accurate conception of the ideas of an author when expressed only in the language of imagery. Figurative resemblances may give vigour and liveliness to our conception of those truths which have already obtained their seats in the chamber of the understanding, but they are by no means calculated to make us comprehend any new or original notion. Now this difficulty must always be very seriously felt in the case of prophecies unfulfilled. The language of prophecy is seldom the language of common life; and though its reference to a subject becomes sufficiently clear when once we have obtained a key to its interpretation by seeing it fulfilled, yet it is generally of so metaphorical a nature that, previous to its fulfilment, it is almost impossible with strictness and certainty to define its meaning. Such also is the language of that chain of prophecies relative to the Messiah, which under the Mosaic covenant were slowly and gradually unfolded by various individuals in different ages and altogether unconnected with each other. So gradual, indeed, was the developement of the scene, that no succeeding prophet (and it is a strong argument for their general credibility) can in any instance be sus-

pected of having derived the new light which he threw upon the subject, by inferences gathered from the casual hints of those who had preceded him. The links are all intimately and mutually connected, but yet so, that it is evident that each individual must have independently formed and added his own to the series. Moses had recorded the earliest promise of God when he declared unto the serpent that the seed of the woman should bruise his head, and we have seen those words literally fulfilled in Jesus Christ who was born of a pure virgin. But who that was not a prophet could, previous to that accomplishment, have seen the necessity of thus limiting their sense, or have dared to pronounce, without the inspiration of God, that a virgin should conceive and bear a son—that a woman should compass a man. This promise of the Messiah was afterwards limited to the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But who could, from this circumstance alone, have drawn the information that the Saviour should spring from the loins of David, and first shine upon the world in the small and inconspicuous village of Bethlehem? Or grant all these things known, and who could yet have fixed with Daniel the true and exact period of his appearance, or have pronounced, with Micah* that the Lord “would send his Messenger to

* Micah iii.

prepare his way before him." All these prophets added something essential to what had been before revealed concerning Christ. Yet could they not have consulted together in their deceit, because they flourished at different periods. Neither could they have copied or enlarged their descriptions from the writings of former prophets, because the things which they separately revealed were not necessarily implied in what went before, and were often but remotely, if at all, connected with each other. They all preserve the common and leading characters of the Lord of Righteousness in their descriptions, in order to fix the identity of the person to whom they refer; but they all, at the same time, contribute some peculiar and original designation, in order to mark the independence and continuity of their own heavenly communications.

The third remark, therefore, which I would make upon these predictions, is this. That the character of the Messiah was not drawn in them at once, and at full length; but was sketched at different periods and by different hands, each adding a distinct and unborrowed feature,* till the whole

* A very interesting Dissertation might be formed, pointing out the circumstances which each prophet successively added to the predictions of his predecessors, and shewing that these circumstances were neither necessarily implied, nor could by inference be gathered from what had been written before. I may now add

was finished and detailed with that fulness and perspicuity in which we now behold it in the records of the Old when compared with the fulfilments of the New Testament.

4. Lastly, many of these prophecies were such as an impostor, unaided and unapproved by God, however willing, could never have been able to accomplish; for they were to be fulfilled not only *by*, but *in* the person of the Messiah. There were many things not only to be done but suffered by him, things which wholly depended upon the will and actions of others, and over which he himself could exercise no control. Any one, whose wish or interest it had been to practise the delusion, might have imitated many of the marks of the Messiah, might have personated the character of a Redeemer in Israel, and assumed the glorious names of "the Wonderful, Counsellor, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." He might have lived in a state of wretchedness and poverty, and have made himself of no reputation, and taken upon him the form of a servant, and become a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He might even have given up his life an offering for sin. But could he have moulded

that such a Dissertation has been published. See an excellent Tract entitled, "The Gradual Developement of the Office, Titles, and Character of Christ in the Prophets, a proof of their Inspiration." By Allen Cooper, A. M. of Oriel College, Oxford. London: printed for C. and J. Rivington. 1825.

the passions of others to his purpose? Could he have made his name to be despised and rejected of men? Could he have been born and have suffered at a particular time and place, and in a particular and miraculous manner? Could he have caused them to look on him whom they had pierced, or to divide his raiment, or to cast lots upon his vesture, or to prevent a bone of his body from being broken? Could he have performed those wonders which marked both the entrance of our Saviour into life, and his departure from it again unto his Father? Preach the Gospel to the poor he might, and so do we; but could he have confirmed his preaching by the testimony of works following, by the healing of the sick and giving sight to the blind? Yet these things had the prophet Isaiah declared that the Messiah should do; but the power to perform them is of God alone, and whoever, therefore, possesses that power, must possess it by the ordinance of God, as a discriminating mark of his appointment to a peculiar office.

Seeing, then, that the prophecies concerning the Messiah were in number so multiplied; in their promulgation so gradual; in their nature so varied and minute; and combining into the delineation of one single character, circumstances so distinct and almost opposite to each other, we undeniably conclude, that he who fairly and fully

accomplished them all, was doubtless that particular personage whom they were intended to prefigure and represent. Such a man was Jesus of Nazareth, that man of wonders, whom we have already beheld, as a man approved of God. He was born of a Virgin; born in Bethlehem; born at the appointed time, when all men were looking for the Consolation of Israel. His messenger went before him and he came suddenly to his temple, in the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and of might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. He lived, he died, he was buried, he rose again and ascended up on high, according to the Scriptures. As his miracles and doctrines prove him to be *a* prophet, so from the Scriptures, therefore, he may be shewn to be *the* prophet Christ. “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,” and here at length we may close the direct and positive evidences of Christianity with satisfaction to our minds.

Poor and idle indeed must have been that speculation, unworthy any wise, most of all unbecoming any Christian man, which leads to no practical consequences, “which ministereth not to godly edifying,” which imprints upon the heart no deeper sentiments of adoration to God, which raises in us no livelier feelings of charity to man, which terminates in no beneficial effects upon the holiness of our life here, or the happiness of our

life hereafter. “For of every idle word that men speak they shall assuredly give an account in the day of judgment,” and I know of none of the commandments of our Lord which it can be more useful, by reason of its importance, for the mind of a minister to dwell upon, or more fearful, by reason of his disobedience, for the memory of a minister to recall. Strive we then to rescue our present inquiry from the folly, and the sin, and the danger, and the damnation of idle words, by setting before you that faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation,—“that they which believe, be careful also to maintain good works.” ’Tis true, we are taught, and therefore teach, that “we live by the faith of the Son of God.” But then we are also taught, and therefore also teach, that “the just” alone “shall live by that faith.” ’Tis true we read, and therefore speak, as if “by faith a man were justified, without the works of the law;” but then we also read, and therefore also speak not as if “the hearers of the law are just before God,” but only as if the doers of the law shall by faith be so justified. Wherefore in our exhortations to godliness we would call “unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference,” to add virtue to their faith. Pain and corruption are the same in nature, whether they be found in the head or in the hand of the afflicted. And sin is exceeding sinful, and in its exceeding sinfulness will it be judged, whatever member of

the Christian body it may affect. Tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath will be poured down alike upon pride and covetousness, and lasciviousness, and indolence and drunkenness and revellings and banquetings, and such like, wherever they continue and abound ; whether in the old or in the young. And high and low, rich and poor, understanding and simple, master and disciple must alike sit down in meekness at the feet of Jesus, and be content to learn wisdom from the fishermen of Galilee. For in the rules of righteousness there is no respect of persons with God ; and faith, and love, and worship, and prayer, and heavenly-mindedness, and purity, and humility, are all alike demanded in the Gospel from all. “ Let every one, therefore, that nameth the name of Christ, depart” also at the same time “ from iniquity ;” because it is so comfortable to a man’s own mind, so conducive to the glory of God, and so necessary for the conversion of sinners from the error of their ways.

First of all, I say, let us be influenced by our hopes and fears, and be godly for our own sakes. As we rejoice in the sunshine of future happiness, or tremble at the darkness of future misery, let us not be cast down by the ruggedness of our holy path, but remember the unspeakable greatness of the reward.

Next, let us be godly for the glory of God and in compliance with the wise and merciful designs of his providence. The law of the Lord is an undefiled law, formed and intended to purify the soul. How then do we blaspheme the name of the Almighty, thwart his views and counteract his blessings, if, with a deep sense of the excellence of our religion in our minds, and full acknowledgment of its truth upon our lips, we yet curse it with an inward barrenness, and render abortive its every effort to bring forth the fruits of holiness in our lives. “Faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” If, therefore, we have faith without works, it is possible that we know God, but it is certain that, as God, we glorify him not.

Lastly, let us be pure, holy, harmless, and undefiled, for the sake and salvation of those around us. As the lot has not fallen to us in a heathen country, we are not called upon to pass through the fire of persecution; but we are still bound to prove the stedfastness of our faith by the sincerity of our obedience. We are surrounded by the prejudices of the Jews, the weakness of unstable brethren, and the perverted judgment of the philosophic infidel; and little do we know of the influence of example, or the evil consequences of evil actions, if we dare to flatter ourselves that

they are looking with an eye of indifference upon our conduct. It may be, that had it not been for the inconsistency which subsists between the profession and practice of Christians, those that have fallen might have yet been standing in the faith; Infidelity might ere this have ceased to blot the moral creation; and all the scattered children of Israel have been numbered in the fold and flock of Christ. But these things you will say have happened according to the word of prophecy. They have. “It must needs be that offences come, but woe be to that man by whom the offence cometh.” Let us, then, most diligently study to avoid that woe. Let us humbly examine our hearts, and reflect upon our lives, and strive after perfection. For all the reasons which I have advanced, “let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart also from iniquity.

DISCOURSE VIII.

COLOSS. chap. i. ver. 23.

“ Continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel which ye have heard.”

WE have hitherto been occupied in giving a connected and systematic view of the evidences of Christianity, and in endeavouring to point out the particular power of each separate part in supporting and binding up the whole. The miracles, the doctrines, and the life of our Lord, and the prophecies by which the Messiah was described under the law, have passed before our understanding in successive review, and we have been satisfied that each link in the chain has its peculiar office; that they cannot be separated without mutual and material injury both to their beauty and strength; and that though, when singly considered, there is not one which alone and by itself can sustain the whole weight of the

Christian cause, yet that, when they are taken all together, they form a complete demonstration of the religion of the Gospel, as it is possible to obtain of any moral proposition whatsoever. I have frequently and seriously meditated upon this course of reasoning, and I do solemnly declare that I cannot perceive in it any irrelevant or inconclusive circumstance, which should unsettle our faith in its validity, or move us "away from the hope of the Gospel which ye have heard." But as the subtilty of scepticism has somehow or other contrived to raise an ingenious objection against almost every part of the process, it will be necessary to recapitulate the various arguments of which the scheme is composed, and to consider the several objections as we go along, in order to shew that philosophy has never yet been able to discover any latent fallacy or internal weakness, in that train of evidence which, in its outward semblance at least, appears to be possessed of so much consistency and strength.

1. Having established the credibility of the Evangelists, as witnesses of the works and words of Jesus, we referred, in the first place, to his miracles; and observing that they were wrought in defence of his claims to a divine commission, we presumed that the power by which he per-

formed those miracles, proceeded either immediately or ultimately from God, as the sign and seal of his divine approbation.

Now what is it that our adversaries object to this conclusion? They tell us that a miracle conveys no absolute proof either of the veracity or of the divine authority of the being by whom it is wrought; but is a mere mark and evidence of his extraordinary knowledge or power. Abstractedly considered, it is impossible for any proposition to be more correct and just than this. Define a miracle in what terms you will. Call it a violation of the laws of nature, with Hume; call it an exception to the laws of nature, with Rousseau; or describe it, more accurately and modestly, as a work beyond the unassisted strength and knowledge of its visible agent to perform, and still without all doubt, when considered merely as a miracle, it is a proof only of its author being endued with some unusual power over the operations of nature, or a more than common insight into her laws. But what of this? It is not from miracles, when separated from their concomitant circumstances, and considered in an abstract and insulated point of view, as mere acts of power; but it is from miracles when viewed in connexion with their circumstances, when viewed in connexion with the pur-

pose for which they were advanced, and with their number, and their character, and their tendency, as well as their extraordinary nature, that we judge of the propriety or impropriety of any appeal which is made to them. It is not from their might alone, but it is from the union of might, and mercy, and multitude, in the wonderful works of our Lord, combined with the fact of his appeal to them as the signs of his office, that we reason upwards to his divine authority. We argue, and we think we argue justly, thus: We say, that it is inconsistent with the fundamental attributes of the Deity to suppose that any event can take place without his especial permission. We then further say, that it is equally irrational to suppose that he will in any instance permit a series of the most astonishing works, works the most congenial to his own benevolent nature, to be continually performed from day to day for the express purpose of deceiving mankind and inducing them to believe that the testimony of Heaven has been given to a lie. But the miracles of Jesus *were* thus performed from day to day, and, if he was indeed endued with no divine authority, performed for the express purpose of deceiving mankind and inducing them to believe that the testimony of God had been given to a lie. If, therefore, the religion and pretensions of Jesus had been false, there appears to be a very

strong presumption indeed against supposing that the God of infinite holiness and everlasting truth would either have aided him himself, or permitted him to have been aided by any subordinate being, in the performance of those miracles to which he appealed as the evidences of his being a messenger of God. A few lying and artificial wonders, a few portentous and deceitful signs, it is possible, or at least conceivable, that God may sometimes allow to be displayed by men of wickedness, in defence of falsehood. But that miracles in multitude without number, in nature the most unequivocal and true, in tendency so congenial to universal goodness, and in magnitude so characteristic of Almighty power—that miracles which, if the Gospel be false, have actually continued, for the space of eighteen hundred years, to delude the best and wisest amongst the children of men—that such miracles should have been permitted to be untruly set before the world as the sure and solid evidences of a divine commission, is a supposition which violates every reasonable notion of a superintending Providence. Thus we argue; and hence we conclude, that whatever may be the opinion which we choose to form with regard to the immediate origin of the extraordinary powers of Jesus; whether we refer the operation of his miracles, as we most undoubtedly

ought, to the direct interposition of the great God of Heaven himself, or to the inferior agency of some subject spirit, the inference will, in both cases, prove ultimately the same. The miracles of Jesus were, in both cases, performed under divine approbation, and are, therefore, in both cases, the infallible testimonies of his divine authority. Miracles in themselves may only be marks of power, and there may be considerable difficulty in proving from the character and tendency of the Christian miracles, that they were so strictly of God as to have been actually wrought **by** God's finger. They might—I deny the fact, but I admit its possibility—they might possibly be no more than the works of some spiritual and invisible being subordinate to God; but still it is impossible that they could have been wrought without God's permission. There can be but little difficulty, therefore, in concluding that the doctrines of Christianity, which they were brought forward to support, were themselves both sanctioned and approved by God; which, after all, is the only point, of which it is of any material importance that we should be assured.

Having thus answered the objection which is drawn from reason against the force of miracles, we must next proceed to answer that which is

deduced from experience. From the power of the Egyptian magicians, it is said to be evident, not only that God may, but also that he actually does, sometimes permit miracles to be worked by the disciples of a false as well as of a true religion, and that consequently the miracles by which a doctrine is supported, are by no means a conclusive evidence of the divinity of its origin.

Rousseau* has laboured this objection with his usual ingenuity and eloquence, but, after all, I am at a loss to conceive in what possible way it can be made to apply against the conclusiveness of our argument from the Gospel miracles. There may be some doubt whether any miracles were really wrought by the magicians of Egypt. But be this as it may, the fact is, at any rate, the only instance within the whole range of history in which we have any thing like a satisfactory proof of the performance of any real miracles by the votaries of a system notoriously false—any evidence, I mean, at all equal to that by which we establish the truth of the works of Moses and of Christ. The only inference to be drawn from a solitary example, is therefore this; that what God has done once, he may do again; and that as he once empowered the Egyptian enchanters to effect a real miracle, he may, *under similar circum-*

* Lettres de la Montagne—to which I generally refer.

stances, empower the disciples of any other false religion to do the same again. Try then and examine whether there be any similarity whatever between the circumstances under which the miracles of Jesus and of the magicians were produced.

In Egypt, there was a contest between the worshippers of two different deities. In Christianity there is no contest at all. Jesus came to fulfil the law and the prophets, and not to destroy.

In Egypt, the miracles of the magicians were convicted as enchantments by their inferiority. In the miracles of the Gospel, there is no inferiority. They are more numerous and magnificent and merciful than those of any other religion in the world.

In Egypt, the means of an immediate detection were at hand in the triumph of the claims and miracles of Moses, and any momentary doubt which might be experienced with regard to the origin of the magicians' powers, instead of leading to any permanent delusion, would only serve to establish a firmer conviction of the truth. It is perfectly reasonable, therefore, to suppose that God, in this peculiar and only instance, might wisely permit the magicians to perform miracles, though their religion was false ; because

the permission, when accompanied by the superiority of Moses, could have no possible tendency to propagate their religion as true. But the case is very different indeed with the miracles of Christianity, if really wrought without the divine interference or approbation, and in defence of a religion which is in fact only of human invention. For the miracles of the Gospel may be traced up to their heavenly origin by all the most distinguishing criteria of truth and divinity. They have in themselves every appearance of coming from God. The moral precepts of the system they support are holy and good, its positive institutions innocent, and its mysterious doctrines, though far beyond the reach of human comprehension, are yet in no case contradictory to the principles of human reason: so that in the religion of the Gospel we have no means whatever of detecting the deceit, if deceit exist, and the delusion when once begun must continue for ever. It is not, then, in this case, as in the case of the magicians, a reasonable supposition, but a supposition directly inconsistent with the attributes of the Deity, to imagine that he would have permitted Jesus to perform his miracles with all the usual marks of divinity about them, and under circumstances where it was impossible to detect the deceit; unless the religion which he preached had received the sanction of divine authority.

The conclusion, therefore, to which we have ultimately arrived, is this, that there is such a difference in the circumstances under which the miracles of the magicians and of Jesus were wrought, that it would be both unfair and unsafe to make an inference which we have drawn from the one our rule of judgment with regard to the other. To say, that because the miracles of the magicians do not prove their religion to be true, therefore neither do the miracles of Christ prove Christianity divine, is to draw a general inference from one particular case, and then apply it to another which has no resemblance to the first. Where the facts are different, the same reasoning will not apply.

2. It should be carefully remembered, however, in the second place, that we did not rest our whole argument for the divine authority of Jesus upon the nature and tendency of his many miracles alone. We drew from the mercy and multitude of his mighty works no more than a very strong presumption in favour of their divine origin. That presumption, however, was afterwards confirmed into certainty, by observing that the great and glorious wonders of the Gospel were wrought in defence of a religion of the most perfect righteousness and universal truth. Nor does there appear to be the slightest shadow of a doubt, as to

the validity of this inference. It may be—and we admitted the possibility—it may be possible for some powerful, yet evil being, to work numerous and beneficent wonders for the delusion of mankind ; but we deny that there is any instance on record, in the history of the world, in which the fact can be proved ; and we maintain that an evil being would never willingly exert his power in favour of a religion which is holy and true, nor ever be permitted to exert it in favour of one which is unholy and false. We, therefore, conclude that the miracles of Christ, being produced in defence of a system where all that is known and understood is just and wise and holy, must necessarily have been sanctioned by the divine approbation, and be the marks and proofs of a divine authority. Such is our demonstration ; but here again we are interrupted by men reasoning after the rudiments of the world, and are told, that if the truth of the doctrine can be established without and before the consideration of the miracle, the miracle is needless, and that if it cannot, the miracle is inconclusive. In other words, our argument is said to run round a vicious circle, proving the doctrine by the miracles, and the miracles by the doctrine.

Oh ! that men, before they proceed to apply their propositions upon any occasion, would be

careful to examine not only whether they be just and true in themselves, but also whether they be relevant to the matter in hand. In a certain sense, and to a certain extent, the objection to which we have alluded is perfectly correct; but it is correct, neither in that sense, nor to that extent, in which it would destroy or even weaken the evidence for the Gospel. Our argument was simply this;—We observed, first, that the source of the power by which our Saviour performed his miracles—miracles whose reality depends upon the testimony by which they are supported—may be proved to have been divine and not devilish, by a reference to the truth of that part of his speculative doctrines and the excellence of that part of his moral precepts, upon which it falls within the province of human reason to determine. We next concluded that he who wrought such divine miracles in proof of his divine authority, must necessarily be regarded as a divine teacher; and then, from his being a divine teacher, we inferred, not only the additional weight which such a circumstance confers upon those doctrines and precepts of whose nature and tendency we are able to judge, but also the truth and divine authority of every other doctrine and precept which Jesus delivered; and whose truth, either because they are positive ordinances or because they relate to subjects of a heavenly and mysterious character, could never otherwise

have been brought home to the human understanding. From the reasonableness of our Saviour's opinions in common things; from the propriety of his ideas with regard to the attributes and operations of the Deity, and from the excellence of that system which he has set before us as a rule of life, we infer that the power by which he wrought his wonderful works was from the God of holiness and truth. Having thus established his character as a teacher sent from God, we next infer his authority also in all *uncommon* things, and argue, that the positive ordinances which he enjoined, as of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, and the mysterious declarations which he made, with regard to the atonement and judgment of the world, must, because made by him, be both certainly and divinely true. It thus appears, that we do indeed prove the divine origin of the miracles by the truth of some of the doctrines, and the truth of some of the doctrines by the divine origin of the miracles. Yet we cannot be said to argue in a vicious circle, because the doctrines by whose truth the divine origin of the miracles is proved, are not the same doctrines with those whose truth the divine origin of the miracles themselves is afterwards brought forwards to confirm. The doctrines, whose truth is brought forward to prove the divine origin of the miracles, are those within the

reach of human judgment. Those doctrines, on the other hand, whose truth the miracles are supposed to establish, are those whose truth it is beyond the limits of man's feeble philosophy to ascertain; and the only satisfactory method of overturning the conclusion we have drawn, would be by shewing that these supernatural doctrines are altogether inconsistent with reason or with right. For we allow that miracles alone, however numerous, or merciful, or great, can never firmly establish the divinity of a system which is notoriously unjust or false. But we do confidently maintain, that wherever the character of a religion, so far as it can be understood, is both holy and true, the miracles by which it is accompanied are a sufficient proof that the whole system, if not unworthy of God, did actually proceed from him.

3. The last observation by which we endeavoured to confirm the divine authority of Jesus, consisted in an allusion to the unblemished beauty of his moral character; and here we have happily none of the sophisms of infidelity to contend with. A few sneers against the singularity of his virtue, and a few faint murmurs at the inimitable perfection of his example, are the only means by which his enemies have openly ventured to take away from the holy wisdom of his life. We may now, therefore, be permitted to

pass on to the consideration of the validity of the mode in which we attempted to shew that Jesus, who was one of the prophets of God, was also the predicted prophet of the Mosaic covenant.

4. Now the proof of this proposition, that Jesus was the Christ, we made, in obedience to the doctrines of our Lord and his Apostles, to depend entirely upon his fulfilment of the prophecies of the Old Testament; and so numerous and unequivocal, and yet singular, did their fulfilment appear to be, that it is wonderful how a doubt could ever be entertained of the certainty of their completion. But by turning away his face from light unto darkness; by forgetting the accomplishment of every prediction which relates clearly to Christ, and fixing his attention upon those alone in which the reference to him is less evident, one ingenious writer* has ventured to assert, that "the prophecies cited from the Old Testament by the authors of the New, do plainly relate, in their obvious and primary sense, to other matters than those which they are produced to prove." He therefore holds that they are "to be applied only in a secondary or typical, or mystical, or allegorical, or enigmatical sense."

Admit, for a moment, the whole of this state-

* Collins.

ment to be true. Admit that every prediction, which is alleged in the New Testament as a prediction of the Messiah, can be applied only in a typical sense, and what, after all, will this prove against the pretensions of Jesus to be that Messiah? Nothing. Jesus did many mighty and merciful works. Jesus preached a most holy and wise religion. Jesus lived a most godly and blameless life, and proved himself, by all these marks, to be a prophet of God. Now it is this Jesus, this prophet of God, who, in the New Testament, declares that he was predicted, as the Christ, in the Scriptures of the Old. The only fair and satisfactory way, therefore, of overturning his claims, would be, by producing some express and direct prediction of the Messiah which the life and actions of Jesus contradicted and belied. In that case, we could neither believe him to be the Christ, nor even a prophet of God, however numerous or astonishing his works; because one main part of his pretensions having been found to be absolutely false, we could have little reliance upon his truth in the remainder. But there is no such contradiction to be found in the case of Christ. The only conclusion, therefore, to which the fact, if correct, of the prophecies relating to the Messiah being fulfilled only in an allegorical sense, can lead, is this; that the mind of the Holy Ghost, when speaking of the Messiah, was expressed,

under the Old Testament, only in an allegorical manner—a conclusion which may indeed render the interpretation of these prophecies less evident, but when explained or asserted by a prophet of God, by no means the less just or sure.

But is the whole statement true? Are the prophecies of the Old Testament applied to Jesus by the Evangelists either universally or even generally in a secondary sense? Far otherwise. Turn again to the writings of Isaiah, and read once more his description of the man of sorrows,* and tell me what there is in it that is either secondary or typical. He speaks of a servant of God; and that servant a man; and that man an individual whose acts and sufferings and circumstances were obviously and literally fulfilled in that righteous servant of God “the man Jesus Christ,” and in him alone. David also speaketh thus: “The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” Of whom speaketh the monarch this?† Not of himself as a child of God by creation, nor of any other common man; but of some more especial and appropriate, because begotten, Son of God; and that Son a child who should be possessed of so much of his Father’s greatness, as to make David afterwards cry out and say, “When his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are all

* Isai. liii.

† Acts xiii. 33. Psalm ii. 7.

they that put their trust in him.”* Of none but Jesus could this truly be spoken, and in none but Jesus was it truly fulfilled. Hear the king of Israel once more. “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool.”† He saith also in another psalm, “Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”‡ Now of himself David would never have spoken these things, for he could not call himself his own Lord, and would not, in modesty, have called himself the Holy One of God. Neither in David were these things fulfilled. For “David is not ascended up on high,” but, “after he had served his own generation, fell on sleep and was laid unto his fathers and saw corruption.”|| But Jesus was both the Lord of David and the Holy One of God. Jesus also saw no corruption in his death; but, being raised from the dead, did ascend up into heaven, and sit down at the right hand of the Father, waiting until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled. Now all these passages are produced by the sacred writers in direct confirmation of the Messiahship of their Master, and in all, the prediction had a primary reference to Christ, and a literal fulfilment in Jesus. In these passages alone, therefore, we have a satisfactory demonstration that

* Psalm ii. 12.

† Psalm cx. 1.

‡ Psalm xvi. 10.

|| Acts ii. 13.

Jesus was the Christ, and it matters little how many others may be produced in which the reference appears to have been only secondary, and the fulfilment only figurative.

I have hitherto permitted it to be taken for granted that several of the prophecies of the Old Testament, which are cited in the New, received their accomplishment only in a typical or secondary sense. But what reason have we to allow that even this limited assumption is true? That a virgin should conceive, that Rachel was heard weeping for her children, and that out of Egypt God called his Son, are prophecies distinctly urged by the Evangelists as having been literally fulfilled in Jesus. What reason, then, have we to suppose that they were not primarily also, if not exclusively, spoken of him? Because, as Collins says, "they seem to bear," in the Old Testament, a sense different from that in which they are taken in the New, and to relate to other matters than those which they are produced to prove. But what of that? Who are we, that we should make what *seems* to us to be the meaning of an ancient prediction, the true and only rule of interpretation, when it is opposed by others, who were much better able to judge and yet differ from us in our views? Whatever difficulty there may be in proving the interpretation which is given of

any particular prophecy to be true, if that interpretation proceed from a holy man of God, we are bound to submit to it in every instance in which it is not absolutely impossible or manifestly absurd. Bring the present case to the test of this infallible rule, and then tell me, Oh man, what is thy superior skill that thou shouldest presume to contend in knowledge and authority upon this matter with the faithful Evangelists. They were as Jews, the disciples of Moses. They were, as Apostles, the authorized and instructed and inspired disciples of Jesus, and as his instructed and inspired disciples, and as honest and credible men, they have declared that they believed that these various prophecies were accomplished in Jesus, who shewed himself by many infallible proofs to have been a prophet of God. Their authority, therefore, as the honest and instructed and inspired ministers of Christ, who was a prophet of God, is sufficient to bear the weight of any *possible* exposition or application which they may assign to the prophetic language, however difficult, or however obscure. A positive contradiction to reason or in terms is the only argument we should admit as destructive of the propriety of their* *inspired* illustrations.

* It is this objection of Collins which induced me to insert a proof of the inspiration of the Apostles, *before* I proceeded to

It is not then “to give up the cause of Christianity” to its enemies, when we assert that these darker predictions, though *seemingly* relating to other matters, were yet literally fulfilled by Jesus in their primary sense, and according to the mind of the Holy Ghost in uttering them. It is only to give up our own fallible judgment to the superior authority of the infallible disciples of a prophet who, “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, had expounded to them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.” Nothing, indeed, can be more sophistical or unfair than the manner in which Collins has managed the whole controversy with regard to the prophecies. He has inverted the natural order of reasoning, by beginning with those predictions whose interpretation is the most difficult and obscure, instead of those in which it is the most decided and plain. Nay, he has avoided the consideration of some of the most forcible altogether. Again, he has never alluded to the fact that the Messiahship of Jesus may be proved without any reference to the more doubtful prophecies, and from passages whose meaning and application to Christ is obviously, primary, and unequivocally literal. He has forgotten that the interpretation of the darker prefigu-

reason from their applications of ancient prophecies to Jesus of Nazareth, and the advantage which has thus been gained in answering the objection will, I trust, appear evident.

rations of the Messiah, if not absolutely impossible, rests as much upon the authority of the expositors as the nature of the expositions themselves; and he has omitted to observe a very important distinction as to the different time and manner in which the different kinds of predictions are produced by the sacred writers. Predictions in which there is a manifest and unequivocal reference to Christ are those which were chiefly employed by the Apostles in their contests with the unbelieving Jews. Those, on the other hand, in which the intention of the prophet is more indirectly and obscurely revealed, are generally to be found in the Gospels alone, which were written for the instruction and consolation of believing Christians. I call this an important distinction, because it points out to us the difference we should observe in making use of the clearer or the darker prefigurations of the Messiah. In our contests with the hardened and notorious infidel, we should begin always with the plainest prophecies, because sufficient and most forcible. The rest may be reserved for the satisfaction of the yielding sceptic, or the support of the established Christian.

Thus have we retraced our steps through the whole process of our demonstration, and, examining link by link the entire chain of our reasoning, have found it possessed not only of

outward fairness, but of inward strength. We have taken each objection into consideration as it occurred, and think, at least, that we have detected their unsoundness, shewn the fallacies upon which they rest, and proved them inapplicable in every instance to the evidences of Christianity. I could much have wished to have added a variety of most important inferences which follow from and recommend the course I have pursued : but for the present I must forbear. The time is past, and past in speculative reasonings, without leaving me more than a few moments for recalling your thoughts to practical godliness.

But what word of exhortation shall I this day take? Already have I spoken of the awful necessity of adding virtue to our faith, and besought you, as you value Christ's glory and man's hopes, to depart from iniquity of every kind, and to flee the lust, and the indolence, and the covetousness, and the pride, and the vanity of the flesh. And what more shall I now say? What, but this? That there is a virtue of the mind, as well as of the body; an iniquity of the head, as well as of the heart; and a lust, and an indolence, and an intemperance, and a pride, and a vanity, in the moral conduct of the understanding, as well as of the affections of our nature. Look to those children of darkness, those despisers of

the word of God whose errors we have been so labouring to correct. Think of their delusion, and then hear ye the word of the Lord. Thus is it spoken unto them. “Behold, ye despisers, and *wonder*”—wonder that your counsel against the Holy One of God is brought to naught, that your reason was most unreasonable, your philosophy deceitful, your wisdom foolishness, and your imaginations vain! This might of itself seem a sufficient punishment for the boastful presumption of the Deist, to hear that the fancied triumph of his reasoning shall vanish away as a vision of the night before the morning ray. But the Scripture speaketh also of his destruction, and crieth out, “Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and *perish*.” What then shall the unbeliever say to excuse himself in his infidelity and turn away from him this wrath of God? Shall he plead the innocency of error, and say that he was deluded ere he did delude?—But why was he in error? God giveth wisdom liberally to those that ask him, and prayer is a duty of natural religion, as well as of revealed; and if his error spring from his neglect in asking wisdom at the hands of God, it is fit that in the sinfulness of that error he should die. Prayerless thoughts are seldom sanctified. Or shall he say, that he was misled by some unavoidable prejudice? God tempteth no man above his strength,—and so he is sinful still.—Or shall he

urge, that in his ignorance he fell? Out of his own mouth shall he be judged. For, behold, the Deist is called rational, and resteth in reason, and maketh his boast of philosophy, and is confident that he himself, being instructed out of the perfection of nature's law, is a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, and an instructor of the foolish Christian. How then shall he escape, if, professing to approve only the things that are more excellent, it shall be found, as it will be, that the word of God has been blasphemed in the world through his presumption?

Ye see, then, that there can be no such thing as the innocence of intellectual error in religion. It is in thoughts as it is in deeds. "If thou thinkest well, thou shalt be accepted, but if thou thinkest not well, sin lieth at the door." Before we can go wrong, whether in opinion or act, we must have turned ourselves from the means of grace, and perverted, or abused, the faculties and opportunities with which we have been blessed. Every unbeliever may not be a wicked man in the deeds of his hands, but, before he can have deviated from the truth, he must have sinfully yielded to some intellectual passion of our nature—to the lust of curiosity, or the pride of discovery, or the vanity of singularity, or the covetousness of human praise: or he must have

been wanting in the meekness of true wisdom, the humility of true science, or the virtue of dependence upon God. Beware, then, my brethren, lest this also happen to some of you, which is written—"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Watch more especially, my younger brethren, over the progress of your studies, with unwearied caution and with a godly jealousy, lest by any means ye fall into the snare of the devil, and grow vain in your imaginations, and your understanding become darkened to the apprehension of the excellence of God's revealed truth. If ye so give up yourselves to the practice of rigid demonstration, that ye become disqualified for appreciating the force of moral evidence—ye sin. If ye so altogether study abstract or erudite truth that ye care not for moral and for practical; or if by any partial or exclusive pursuit of the learning of any particular age, or nation, or subject, you imbibe the prejudices of a sect or a science, and are incapacitated for just and general and impartial views—ye sin. If in an earnestness after frivolous, or unimportant, or earthly knowledge, ye lose your relish for graver and divine; if by an anxiety for the graceful accomplishments of the world that is, you neglect the preparation for that which is to come; if you forget the qualities which recommend man to his Maker, in the insignificant acquisitions of mere curiosity

or elegance; if in indolence ye so dissipate and blunt your faculties, as to grow incapable of tasting the power and the wisdom of the Gospel; or if by any course of study or discipline of the mind, however excellent and useful it may be in itself, ye fall away from the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, —ye are sinful still, and shall give an account of your intellectual wickedness before the judgment-seat of Christ. I say not that all unbelievers are equally guilty before God, neither do I presume to measure the several degrees of their evil and their punishment. But this I do say, in justice, that, if God be merciful and powerful enough to give wisdom liberally to them that ask it of him in faith and nothing wavering, then none who err can be without their guilt. This I say in justice, and this also I add in mercy, that the least guilty would appear to be those who have never been instructed in the knowledge of the truth of the Gospel, nor been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

And, Oh, my Fathers, what a contemplation does this present to us, to whom the instruction of others is committed under God, if, because we have neglected to give them the knowledge of the rudiments of Christian wisdom, they fall into the error and condemnation of disobedience or disbelief. They, indeed, shall have their own burthen

of woe to bear, but we too shall accompany them to the shades of darkness, and have opened for ourselves a fountain of never-failing tears. For, if the despisers themselves shall behold, and wonder, and perish, of how much sorer punishment, think you, shall not we be counted worthy, if by our neglect or folly we have made them so. Seriously and solemnly, then, let us put the question to our hearts, and ask our consciences, whether we are or are not guilty as concerning this thing—whether we have or have not directed our endeavours to promote to the utmost of our power the cause of that religion by which so many of us live here, and by which we must all of us live hereafter? If with sincerity the answer be returned, I fear that we shall scarce be able to rise up altogether unpolluted with blame. As individual instructors, I trust we have little to lay to our charge as neglecting to give encouragement to the knowledge and practice of piety; and in the government of those particular Colleges over which we preside, or in which we participate, I know that much has been done to carry the mind and the heart to the studies which lead unto everlasting blessedness. But have we consented or refused to set the public seal of our University, as a body, to religious pursuits? Have we or have we not given a public testimony to the world of the attention with which we cultivate, and the reverence with which we

regard those spiritual things, for whose propagation and improvement our privileges were granted, and our rights conferred? Is it or is it not possible, that one most ignorant in all the necessary erudition of a Christian may yet receive uncensured the highest of the honours we bestow, whilst one most deeply imbued in the principles of sacred science may pass away unpraised from the trial? If these things be so—if neither the rudiments of our holy faith, nor even the language in which its records are written, form any portion of our public and authorized examinations for degrees; if neither reward nor disgrace attend our knowledge or ignorance of the pages of the Gospel at that period at which our proficiency is finally tried—be it yours to judge how far, as a public and most important body, we can be said to encourage the studies of religion, or give a pledge to our country that we are fulfilling the duty for which we exist—the duty of raising the national character upon the basis of the national faith, and building up the rising generation upon the immutable foundation of Jesus Christ.

I urge not these considerations in ignorance of the sacrifices which some, perhaps erroneously, may suppose that it will be necessary to make in other things, in order to introduce so essential and extensive a subject of inquiry with-

in the sphere of our accustomed course of studies; neither do I look forward with a fanciful enthusiasm to any mighty revolution in the state of the religious world as the immediate result of the change. I urge the subject as it stands connected with your duty. I press it upon your thoughts as it affects your own eternal happiness or misery in the world to come. To treat it upon the ground of mere present expediency is a narrow and unbecoming view of its awfulness, ministering perpetual cause of sophistry, and questions which may serve for strife, but not to godly edifying. What, if there be some sacrifice to be made (though it may fairly be doubted whether any sacrifice at all will attend the measure); what, if some portion of scientific glory may be lost, or some region of earthly and abstract knowledge be less cultivated? Is there nothing to make up for the sacrifice, nothing to compensate the loss? Meet the question as Christians. Meet it, as it only can and ought to be met, upon broad and Scriptural grounds—the ground of your duty to God's glory, your country's welfare, and your own salvation. Think not only of the sacrifice to be made, but compare it also with the advantages to be had in return—advantages as far superior to any other consideration, as the enduring blessedness of eternity is above the fading interests of time. If there be learning, it shall fail; if there

be sciences, they shall cease; if there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and that word hath proclaimed the decree, that every man should "be ready always"—and ready he cannot be unless he be able, and able he cannot become unless he be taught, "to give an answer to every one that asketh of him a reason of the hope that is in him." What then shall be our reward in the great judgment of God, if we have fulfilled this decree, and what our fearful punishment if, either as a body or as individuals, it has been by us despised? "When the Son of Man shall appear in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory," and divide the sheep from the goats, the faithful from the faithless, and place them on the right or on the left hand of his throne. Into one of these folds we must enter. On the right hand or on the left hand of the Lord all that are around me must stand; and melancholy as it is, to form the thought, it must needs be, perhaps, that some of those who now rejoice in the innocence and ingenuousness of youth, may find their final destiny amongst the faithless and perverse. For with all the energies which we may put forth, with all the diligence we may employ, with all the anxiety we may feel, with all the prudence we may exert, it is scarce possible but that some may fall away from virtue,

and sink down into the habitation of devils and the damned. When their voice of anguish, from the deep pit of their destruction, shall strike upon our ears, what is the impression it will produce upon our hearts? A feeling of sorrowfulness without doubt, to think of talents wasted, virtue lost, and the beautiful brightness of early hope broken and blasted by the chilly touch, the heartless reasonings of unrighteous unbelief. Yet if our duty towards these fallen ones has been done, it will be a feeling of sorrowfulness without fear,—chastened and subdued into pious regret, by the cheering consciousness that we are guiltless of their blood. But if their words be fraught with the language of excuse, and we hear them pleading for a mitigation of woe, because, though they rejected their Redeemer in their age, yet in their youth they were neither rewarded nor encouraged in the search after truth; then will the voice which cometh up from the prison of their misery, come loaded with a curse upon our selves, and call us down from the blessedness we thought we had inherited, to be mingled in the flames of their wretchedness and remorse.

But, perhaps, I am passing the bounds which become my station and my age; and I forbear. Be it yours, my Fathers, to judge and to correct what is amiss. To me, or to any minister of

God, it can only belong to exhort with all meekness, yet with all earnestness, them that bear rule in our University, to give a more direct and special fulfilment to the Apostle's injunction, by some additional regulations with regard to the *public* studies and examinations of those, whose instruction, both in worldly and spiritual things, is committed under God, to their charge.* I would beseech you as elders, so to divide the attention and the time of those who are sent hither to be imbued with all the necessary erudition of a man and a Christian, that every one, upon quitting this fountain of knowledge, may carry away with him "a reason of the faith and the hope that is in him."

* I cannot permit a third edition of these Lectures to appear without adding, that the subject here touched upon has been considered, and that such a change has taken place in the *public* examinations of the University, that no one can now obtain a degree without some portion of classical erudition, and some acquaintance with the principles of his religion.

DISCOURSE IX.

LUKE, chap. vii. ver. 22, 23.

“ Then Jesus answering, said unto them, Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard ; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.”

IN opening our views upon the evidences of Christianity we professed an intention of examining whether the answer of our Saviour to the Baptist contained a satisfactory solution of the question he had proposed, and whether the circumstances of Christians in the present day are so far similar, as to enable them to follow out the same course of reasoning for themselves, and to derive from it, when completed, a sufficient and solid demonstration that Jesus was the Christ. But we may seem, perhaps, to have forgotten the proposition with which we originally set out, in the impetuous pursuit of a peculiar system of our

own, and to have lost sight of the example and the authority of Jesus. It will be expedient, therefore, to compare the nature of the arguments we have advanced, and the order in which those arguments have been arranged, with the nature and order of those proofs to which our Saviour referred in defence of his claims, in order to see whether that particular train of evidences which we have ourselves pursued, be in fact the same—of the same force, and formed upon the same model as his.

The inquiry of the Baptist contained a request for some distinguishing mark of the Messiahship of Jesus, and the mark to which, in reply to his demand, John was taught to look for a solution of his doubts, was a combined and connected view of the miracles and doctrines of our Lord. “Go,” said our Saviour to the disciples of John, “and tell him what things ye have seen and heard.” Tell him the works I do, and the words I speak. Tell him, first of all, “what things ye have *seen*” how wonderful, how merciful, how varied are my works, “how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up.” To the character, the Evangelist informs us that our Saviour added also the number of his astonishing works; for he observes that, “in that same

hour," when the men were come to him, "Jesus cured *many* of their infirmities, and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto *many* that were blind he gave sight."

The second particular to which our Lord applied in recapitulating the evidences of his Christian mission, was the nature of his doctrine. "Go your way," says he, in the second place, "and tell him what things ye have *heard*, how that to the poor the Gospel is preached;" how that the simple in understanding are enlightened by the knowledge of that pure and gentle wisdom which is from above, those glad tidings of truth and salvation, which speak peace on earth, and good-will towards men. Say that my doctrines, like myself, are holy and undefiled, and therefore worthy to be confirmed by the testimony of a perfect and Almighty God.

Thus far it is evident, that we have pursued, both in the nature and arrangement of our proofs, the very method which our Lord himself condescended to use. Like him, we have first of all referred to the mighty and benevolent character of his varied and numerous works, for a presumptive proof of the divine origin of his power; and then we have confirmed our conclusion by a subsequent consideration of the righteousness of his religion;

thus establishing the divine authority of his commission after his own manner, and upon his own foundation. As our Saviour spake, so have we spoken.

But it may seem, at first sight, that, in one instance, we have gone beyond the pattern he has left, and, by adding the prophecies of the Old Testament to the miracles and doctrines of the New, have introduced, and introduced as absolutely essential to the confirmation of the Messiahship of Jesus, an argument which he himself has altogether omitted. But it so happens, that a reference to the ancient predictions, though not positively specified, is yet necessarily implied in our Saviour's reply. The very words which proceeded out of his mouth, had fallen before from the prophetic pen of Isaiah, as descriptive of the glory and the greatness of the latter days, in which "God would come and save," and "the Redeemer should come to Zion, and to them that turn from transgression in Jacob."* "He will come and save you,"† says the Evangelical prophet, and "then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." And he afterwards adds, "The Spirit of the Lord hath

* Isaiah lix. 20.

† Isaiah xxxv. 4—6

anointed me to preach glad tidings to the meek.”* Of these passages we have an exact and intentional transcript in the language of our Lord. I say an intentional transcript because, though the intimate familiarity of our Saviour, as a Jew, with every part and portion of the Scriptures of the Old Testament (would to God that we had a like familiarity with holy writ!) might have prompted him, on many occasions, to make an almost unconscious use of the expressions of the ancient prophets, yet, upon the present occasion, no such conjecture can be allowed, because he had previously applied a part of the quotation as a direct and literal prediction of himself. “He came to Nazareth,” says St. Luke,† “and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of Esaias the prophet; and when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it

* Isaiah, lxi. 1.

† Luke iv. 16—21.

again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." And "this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears," must, therefore, be conceived also to have been the spirit of his intention, when, in words of similar import, he returned his answer to the Baptist. Nor is this all. The application of these prophecies by Jesus to himself, rests upon the very same authority as the similar applications of other predictions by his Apostles, that is, upon the inspiration of the person who gave the interpretation; and it consequently follows, that in both cases the propriety of the mode in which they were interpreted is alike sure. Thus do we perceive that we have here set forth to us in the Gospel a course of reasoning in favour of the divine mission and Messiahship of Jesus, which, both in the similitude of its substance, in the arrangement of its parts, and the authority on which it rests, corresponds most exactly to that which we have been so long and laboriously employed in deducing for ourselves. A stronger recommendation of its force and fulness could scarce be desired by a disciple of Christ; for it were irreverent and impossible for the humble servant to imagine for a moment that the answer of his divine Lord could be defective.

It is not, however, by observing its consistency with the principles upon which our Saviour's answer to the Baptist proceeds, nor by pointing out its positive efficacy and direct application in establishing the truth of Christianity, that we can be said to have exhausted the recommendations of that system of evidences which we have been working out. The inferences to which it leads, and the considerations which it suggests, and the difficulties which it solves, confer upon it an additional value and importance in our eyes ; and it is to some of these properties that I would now direct your attention.

1. In the first place, then, we are enabled, from the views which I have been taking of the relative use of the performance of miracles, and the fulfilment of prophecy, in bearing up the Christian cause, to account, in a most simple and satisfactory manner, for the prevalent infidelity of the Jews both in the days of our Saviour and our own.

Upon the first appearance of our Lord amongst the Israelites, there seems to have been a considerable readiness in the great mass of the people to admit his claims ; and at his very first public appearance at the Passover at Jerusalem, " many believed in his name when they saw the miracles

which he did.”* Nor was their belief of a partial or a transitory nature. For, a page or two further on, St. John observes, that the success of Jesus in making disciples was so rapid and extensive that the followers of the Baptist grew jealous for their immediate master’s fame, and came “and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and *all* men come to him.”† Again, when, a little afterwards, the five thousand had been fed with the five barley-loaves, and had gathered and filled twelve baskets with the fragments which remained, they said, “This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world;”‡ and so strongly was this idea impressed upon their minds, that they would have taken him by force and made him a king. At the following feast of Tabernacles we still find that “many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh will he do more miracles than those which this man hath done? Many of the people therefore said, Of a truth this is the prophet. Others said, This is the Christ.”|| The raising of Lazarus from the dead, confirmed at last and extended these opinions so widely, that the Pharisees, who were the continual, because interested, adversaries of Jesus, became alarmed at the progress of the

* John ii. 23.

† John iii. 26.

‡ John vi. 14.

|| John vii. 30, 40, 41.

general sentiment in his favour, “and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him.” The prevalence of this opinion reached its height and its termination at the last melancholy Passover of his life. Then, “much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm-trees and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosannah, Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. The Pharisees, therefore, said among themselves, Behold, the world is gone after him.”*

Thus have we traced the rise and progress of the notions of the Messiahship of Jesus amongst the Jews, and found that they were dictated and nourished by the splendor of his numerous and wonderful *miracles*, which marked him out as an extraordinary prophet of God, at that very time in which all men were looking for the Consolation of Israel. Jesus therefore seemed most naturally to be pointed out as that Consolation, and was very generally regarded in that light during the whole of his ministry, and up to the time of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The opinion had then attained to its greatest

* John xii.12—19.

strength, but from that moment it declined and vanished, and though he had done so many miracles, yet," as the Apostle remarks, "they believed not on him"* any longer, or in his death. The reason of this sudden and permanent change we are next to investigate, and we shall find it to have arisen from a supposed contradiction between his claims and the ancient *prophecies*, a comparison and correspondence between which I have shewn to be the only satisfactory method of proving Jesus, though a prophet, to be the Christ.

It appears, then, that whatever might be the ideas entertained by the Jews concerning Jesus as the Christ, they were of the nature rather of probable conjectures than firm and decided convictions in all, and there were also many who upon every occasion denied the validity of his pretensions. "We know this man," said some, "whence he is, but when Christ cometh no man knoweth whence he is. Others said, This *is* the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him."† And when our Lord afterwards endeavoured to prepare

* John xii. 37.

† John vii. 27. 41—43.

them for his crucifixion, “signifying what death he should die, the people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever, and how sayest thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up?” *

Thus, we perceive, that as the opinions of the Jews in favour of Jesus were founded upon the miraculous proofs of his divine commission, their doubt or rejection of his claims originated in some apparent contradiction which they thought they could discover between the acts and circumstances of his life and their own prevailing, and, in their opinion, infallible interpretations of the predictions relative to the Messiah. One of the most favourite of these false expositions we find to have been that the Law had said “that Christ abideth for ever,” that he should reign an eternally triumphant king, a servant of the Lord, indeed, but one who should prosper, and whose days should be prolonged upon the earth. When, therefore, they beheld the Lord of Life lifted up between two malefactors and slain, the current of their prejudices flowed back against his claims with an unnatural force, and disappointment gave new vigour and ferocity to their unbelief. He would not come down from the cross to please them, and so they would not believe that he had come up

* John xii. 33, 34.

from the grave to save them. In his life they allowed that he had done many miracles; but they felt certain that in his death he had belied and contradicted the predictions of that Messiah whose name and honours he had assumed; and therefore they held, that as it is impossible to suppose that a God of truth would set the seal of miracles to a lie, they were bound both by their reason and their religion, to attribute his astonishing works to a demoniacal or delusive source, or any other cause, rather than consider them as the authorized acts of Almighty power. Had their expositions of the prophecies been correct, their conclusion also had been just. For they reasoned rightly and upon right principles. If the actions, or doctrines, or pretensions of a man do really and indubitably contradict the word of God, his miracles may be magnificent, but can neither be divine nor bear the marks of divine approbation. But these true principles were, by the Jews, incorrectly and presumptuously applied; and falling into the error of that unbeliever whose proud system we have already rebuked, and setting up, like Collins, what "*seemed*" to them to be the meaning of their ancient predictions (but was not actually so) in direct opposition to the assertions of Jesus, whose doctrines and miracles they acknowledged to be real and true, like Collins, they were permitted to fall, because of pride, into a judicial blindness of

the understanding. Yea and even unto this day, when Moses is read unto them, the vail remaineth untaken away from their hearts.

It trenches not, then, in any respect upon the force of the evidences of Christianity, nor upon the consistency of the Gospel narrative, nor upon the reality of the miracles of Jesus, nor upon the truth of the history of his life, to find so entire and sudden a rejection of his claims amongst the Jews; because the change may be clearly and conclusively traced to their prejudiced and erroneous interpretation of prophecy. The reality of his miracles they never doubted, but finding him opposing, as they imagined, the language of the prophets of God, they denied him to be the Christ, and thought themselves obliged to resist the divine origin of his miraculous power. These things are written for our instruction; and powerfully indeed do they represent the necessity of guarding against every false explanation of Holy Writ, of keeping our minds open and in impartiality for the reception of truth, and of doubting in humility our own, that we may the more sincerely rely upon our Redeemer's wisdom.

2. In the eighteenth book of the Jewish Antiquities of Josephus is a passage, and it is a passage which is to be found in every existing

manuscript and copy of his works, which distinctly records the name and actions of Jesus Christ. Yet has it by many been rejected as the spurious introduction of some later age.

“ At that time,” says the Historian, “ lived Jesus, a wise man, if he may be called a man ; for he performed many wonderful works.”

Had the testimony of Josephus stopped short at this point, I could easily have admitted it as genuine, whatever might have been the weight of external testimony against it ; for thus far it contains no more than might have been admitted by the most prejudiced Jew. It speaks only of the “ *wonderful works*” of Jesus without attributing to them any divine authority. But when the passage goes on to state that, “ This was the Christ,” and that he rose again from the dead ; “ the divine prophets having spoken of these and a thousand other wonderful things concerning him,” it is immediately convicted, by internal evidence, as the unskilful forgery of some later Christian. The very line of demarcation between the Christian and Jew, is in the acknowledgment of Jesus as the Christ, and his having fulfilled the predictions of the divine prophets. Both admitted the reality of his miracles, but their divine origin was held by the Christian alone. The quotation, therefore,

which we have made is internally condemned as spurious by transgressing this line ; and when we find that Origen has not only been silent as to its existence, but has expressly asserted that Josephus “ did not believe Jesus to be the Christ,” we plainly perceive that it is a subsequent addition ; because it positively declares it to have been the opinion of Josephus that Jesus “ was the Christ.” The force of external is thus added to that of internal evidence, and the passage falls under the immediate sentence of banishment as an interpolation. Josephus, as a Jew, could never have written thus.

I call this then the second advantage to be derived from the system of evidences we have pursued, that it authorises us at once to reject this fancied testimony of Josephus, as spurious. I speak of this without hesitation as an advantage, because I agree entirely with those learned men, both living and dead, who think that many singular omissions of this same historian in other parts of his works—his silence upon the massacre of Bethlehem, and the miraculous darkness of the crucifixion, may be most satisfactorily accounted for, when considered as a wilful and premeditated silence. But wilful and premeditated it could scarce have been, had the passage now under our review been his own. In that case it would have been difficult indeed to

have reconciled his omission with the truth of the facts to which I allude.

3. The third and perhaps the most important consequence to be drawn from a connected disposition of the several proofs by which the truth of Christianity is supported may be found in its tendency to press upon us the impropriety and the danger of any partial and imperfect views of evidence. It is not by miracles, or by doctrines, or by prophecies alone, that the glorious Gospel of our God is to be defended ; but it is by a cordial union and a happy and philosophical combination of the whole. Yet take up the small but valuable treatise of Jenyns, and you will find him casting the power and credibility of miracles into the shade, in order to build up in their stead his own favourite system of internal evidence. Pass on to the warmer and more energetic reasoning of Chalmers, and you will hear him “openly disclaiming all support from what is commonly understood by the internal evidence,” and turning away from every consideration of the credibility of the message, to devote himself to an illustration of the credibility of the messengers. Nay even in the deeper pages of the mighty Barrow, we may meet with symptoms of this partial and exclusive spirit in setting forth the evidences of religion, and observe with regret that he speaks, in his discourse

upon the sufferings of Christ, of the proof from prophecy, as one “which alone may assure any man that such a person doth come from God, and is in what he declareth or doeth approved by him.” Whether there be any one single argument which is in itself sufficient to break down every barrier of infidelity, and place the citadel of Christianity at rest for ever from its foes, I presume not to determine. The language of our Saviour’s answer to the Baptist would lead me to the formation of a different opinion, and I cannot but deem it to savour rather of boldness than discretion for any one to assert that he could see the Gospel “driven from all her defences and surrender them without a sigh, so long as the phalanx of her historical evidence remains impenetrable.” That ancient river, the river Nile, that pours down its mighty waters over the Egyptian land, and brings the blessings of fruitfulness in the overflowing of its waves, is fed, not by one, but by many tributary streams; and vain and idle indeed should we account the presumption of that boastful traveller who, having pushed his adventurous steps to the head of one of its leading branches, should proclaim, in the pride of discovery, that the spring to which he had mounted was the only real source of its majesty and power. There is not a rivulet, however mean, or nameless, that does not contribute

its proportionate share in the production of the great result ; nor is there one single argument, however trivial, which has not its place and its use in giving strength and beauty to the whole system of evangelical demonstration. But we remark in addition, that it is not less dangerous than unwise, to build up the truth of the Gospel upon some narrow foundation, and to attempt to generate in the mind a disparaging view of any other train of argument. He that has been taught to hold the proof from prophecy or from miracles as comparatively weak and insignificant when compared with the reasoning which is supplied by the internal evidences of the Gospel, will, in the first place, be led to form an overweening notion of the importance of that particular branch of proof. In the second place, and when, as will most probably be the case, he comes afterwards to find out that this favourite argument is possessed neither of the solidity nor the conclusiveness with which he had graced it in his imagination, the undue and contemptuous opinion which he has imbibed to the prejudice of every other species of evidence, will leave him no sure rock of refuge to flee to in his difficulties, and he will fall, perhaps never to rise again. The same evil must also follow, whatever be that particular proof to which we give a partial and undivided attention. But he who instead of devoting his

labours to the exclusive examination of some scanty portion of the argument for Christianity, employs his faculties in a free and a fair contemplation of the whole, will never be confounded by the objections he may hear urged against any insulated part ; but will still turn, in the hour of danger, to the irresistible force of the whole body of his reasoning ; will still appeal to it as his apology, and still rest upon it as his stay. For it is not the lever or the wheel that forms the machine. It is not the eye, or the foot, or the tongue, or the hand, that constitutes the strong and living man ; but it is the intimate connection and the judicious combination of them all. Separate them from each other, and from that moment their strength and their life are lost.

Go then, and the miracles and the doctrines and the prophecies which the Lord did join together in *his* answer, let no man henceforth dare to put asunder in his own. Go, and when the infidel shall ask you a reason of the hope that is in you, tell him that you know both in whom and in what you have trusted, and lay before him the full and connected system of your proofs. Tell him, first of all, that you believe that the things which are written in the Gospel are true. If he ask you why, tell him, that it is because these things were written by the earliest and constant followers of

our Lord ; and because those disciples shewed their sincerity by their sufferings ; and because you never can, and never will renounce your belief in the testimony of men, whose virtue and integrity are known ; who relate what they had heard and seen ; of whom it is impossible to suppose that they were deceived ; and who went down to the grave, through the severest agonies, maintaining with a firm and undaunted countenance the same undeviating tale.—Then lay your Bible before him. Turn to the Gospel itself, and recount to him the works of your Saviour upon earth. Tell him they were works of wonder, and therefore prove that there was in his mind and in his arm the co-operating strength and wisdom of a power superior to that which belongs to our poor and simple humanity. If he borrow the written language of the unbeliever* to aid him in his defence, and ask you, “ what powers, whether supreme or subaltern, mortal or immortal, wise or foolish, just or unjust, good or bad ? ” Tell him that, with you, there is in this no mystery at all ; because the works of Jesus were works of mercy as well as wonder ; and, therefore prove that the Father of mercy, as well as of might, had sent him—that he was a prophet favoured above measure by God. Then, to prove that Jesus was indeed worthy of such sup-

* Shaftesbury.

port, let him learn the spirit of the Gospel by precept and example too. Let him go to the Mount and hear his Saviour commanding his disciples to love *their* enemies, and then let him go to the Cross and listen to that Saviour in prayer for the forgiveness of *his*.

The Gospel and its miracles and its morality having thus spoken for themselves, break to him the seal of prophecy. Lay before him the great scheme of Providence, from the foundation to the end of the world. Point to our first parents, fallen, wretched, banished, and just turning their unwilling steps from the beauties and blessings of a Paradise which they had lost through the disobedience of unbelief, and relieved from despair only by their confidence in the promise of a future Redeemer. Next lead him to the faith of Abraham, rewarded in the gracious declaration, that in Isaac should his seed be called, and that in him should all the nations of the earth again be blessed. Carry him hence through Judah to the man after God's own heart—to David and to David's line. But here the system will become too extensive for particular consideration. Fix his thoughts, therefore, upon some powerful and leading feature. Repeat to him, though it be through tears, the mournful forebodings of Isaiah, concerning him who was “acquainted with grief,” as it were with

a familiar friend ; “ whose visage was so marred ” with his griefs, “ more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men ” — “ who was despised and rejected, wounded, bruised, oppressed, cut off out of the land of the living,” and who in that death did seem to be so utterly forsaken of his God, that men did absolutely “ esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” Ask him, whether he deems this to be a history or a prophecy ? and if he refuse or hesitate to answer, let him be assured that it is the record of an ancient age—that it was, and that it still is, a prophecy, lamenting the continued infidelity of men, and saying, “ Who hath believed our report ? ” Then close the book, and tell him that, with you, at least, it is a thing impossible, that Christianity should be false ; that as Jesus by his miracles and morals is proved to be a divine prophet, so by the prophecies he may be proved to be the Christ. Yet, should he still cling to an evil heart of unbelief ; should he flee to subtlety and the vain deceits of philosophy for his defence — call to his remembrance, that it is at any rate possible that Christianity may be true, and then let him think how different, even upon that ground, are the prospects of hope in him that believeth and in him that believeth not. For what, and if we Christians should lean upon a broken reed ? It is one too tender to wound the

breast that leans upon it. What, and if there should be no world to come? We know the worst. Death is an eternal sleep, the grave a place where all things are forgotten; and so no one can ever hereafter arise from the dust to accuse us of credulity before God, or to punish us for our reliance upon a Redeemer, or to ridicule the daily self-denial with which we have practised the graces of a Christian life. Or be it, that there is a world to come, and that the creed of the Deist should prove true. Still the Christian is safe under the armour of his integrity. The Deist boasts a merciful creed, and is confident that the Lord will never visit with his wrath the involuntary errors of the understanding, or be extreme to mark what has been done or believed amiss from motives of humility. If, then, there be a God that judges the earth, doubtless he will judge the Christian in pity, and according to his sincerity. And if there be verily a reward for the righteous, then will the Christian, who has been devout before his Maker, pure in himself, and bestowed charities upon men, be justified as a righteous man, and receive a righteous man's reward. But if the Gospel speaketh no lies; if Christ really and truly came into the world to save sinners, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? If "he that believeth not shall be damned," then is the unbeliever "condemned

already, because he has not believed on the only begotten Son of God." As we value, therefore, the privilege of our baptism into the kingdom of God upon earth, and our hopes of admission into the kingdom of God in heaven,—our satisfaction here and our safety hereafter—let us cast away the uncomfortable bonds of unbelief, and become, not only almost, but altogether Christians. For Christianity is a religion which speaketh peace on earth, and good-will towards men. It is a religion which, if universally practised, would raise the world into a Paradise, and which, whether true or false, can, at any rate, never make us miserable hereafter. The Deist *may* go to the place of torment, and if the Gospel be the rule of judgment, he will; but, if Deism speak the will of God, the sincere and holy Christian cannot but be saved. Christianity, therefore, is better than Deism, because it is safer.

But God forbid that I should close the merits of Christianity by a reference to the cold and cheerless topic of its mere safety alone. It comes not only with a shield against fear, but with a positive blessing upon its disciples, which no other religion can boast or promise. It is possessed of superior motives,—a more established certainty, and a more glorious recompense. The Deist can only *hope* that his reasoning upon the mercy of God is

correct, that his sins will be pardoned, and himself rewarded eternally according to his works. But what merit have his works to raise that reward into any powerful motive for the resistance of temptation, the quenching of lust, or the hard duty of self-denial in innocent things? Unprofitable to God—is the highest inscription that can be written upon the most splendid and excellent of the works of man, and the reward which can be reasonably expected to descend upon unprofitableness in the world to come will be too meagre to animate our failing virtue, or give hope to the Deist in the day of perplexity and distress. But the Christian is strengthened, established, comforted, by views of a far loftier and more glorious character. Instead of trust and hope, he feels an *assurance* of forgiveness with God, and a reward according to his works; but then not a reward according to those works when measured in the scale of their own utility and greatness, but when perfected and sanctified by the meritoriousness of Christ. He looks, and he doth not look in vain, for something which shall far transcend the mere recompence of his profitableness in his generation. “Eye hath not seen” (how often do we find fit occasion of reference to these words of the Apostle!) “ear hath not heard, into the heart of man it hath not entered to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that

love him"—an exceeding weight of glory which fadeth not away. Compare with this joyful certainty of unspeakable honour and immortality, the cold calculations of the Deist's creed, and what shall we then say to the stability of his holiness? That it is unsound—that it is shadowy—that it rests upon no solid basis, and may yield to the violence of a thousand storms over which the believer in Jesus would ride in his triumph gloriously. The virtue of the Deist may be overpowered by sudden temptation, drowned in forgetfulness and prosperity, weakened by doubt, or dissipated by despair. And is there nothing, then, we may ask, in the world and its wickedness, which can endanger the Christian in his even course? We say not so; but we hold that there is to the Christian no temptation which should be irresistible, no danger which he has not a grace from within, and a motive from without, to withstand; a grace from within, in the support and consolations of the Holy Ghost, and a motive from without, in the amazing greatness of the glory, and the honour, and the blessing, and the immortality, which are laid up in store for all who adore their Redeemer, and bring the tribute of their obedience to his Kingly commands. Those refreshings of the Spirit any Christian man may have, if he will pray for them, and those motives he may look to, if he like to indulge the sacred

thought ; and of this we are verily persuaded, that if he will consider the end of his calling, and seek for that aid which is from above, neither persecution, nor famine, nor the sword ; neither joy nor sorrow ; neither riches nor poverty ; neither honour nor shame ; neither life nor death, nor any other trial shall be able to separate him from his love and obedience to the Lord. Blessed Christian, heir of glory ! Thou hast sought it and it shall be thine. Wretched unbeliever, child of darkness ! Thou hast loved it and it shall happen unto thee, and under darkness shalt thou be reserved in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great and awful day.

DISCOURSE X.

REV. chap. xix. ver. 10.

“ The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

OF the purity of the life and doctrines of our Lord we have spoken as designating the divine origin of his miraculous powers; of those miraculous powers themselves we have pointed out the peculiar utility and force, and to the predictions of the Old Testament, as they were fulfilled in the life and character of Jesus, we have paid a particular and minute attention. But the spirit of prophecy which rested upon Jesus himself, those clear and absolute predictions of future events which are recorded in the pages of the New Testament, have not yet found a place in our scheme. They form, however, so conspicuous a feature in the contemplation of the contents of the Gospel, and are so useful, as well as prominent, in their application to the evidences of

Christianity, that were we to leave them in silence or in obscurity, we should forego one of the brightest and most impressive of all the arguments which can be brought to bear upon the infidelity of modern days, and become justly obnoxious to censure, for a fault which we have already condemned—the error of resting our defence upon a very partial and imperfect estimate of the strength and bulwarks of our faith.

There is no end to the labyrinth of scepticism. The sceptic is one who has a conjecture for every thing, and a belief in nothing. He shuts his eyes to the force of moral proofs, and would rather give one of his doubtful assents to the most unreasonable possibility, if against, than to the most reasonable probability, if in favour of the Gospel. When, therefore, we press upon his attention the irresistible weight of testimony to the miracles of our Lord, and urge the certainty of the argument which those miracles afford to the divine authority of the religion for which they were wrought, he answers that it is possible that testimony may be false, and not probable that miracles should be true. He holds some events (as we have seen) “to be so extraordinary, that they can hardly be established by any testimony.” He allows, however, that were he to become himself a spectator of any extraordinary event, he

would no longer hesitate to admit it, however singular, or however, abstractedly speaking, improbable. Now we maintain, that the whole of this reasoning is repugnant to the common sense of mankind, and we think we have shewn it to be altogether inapplicable to the miracles of the Gospel.* But we rest not upon our own reasonings alone. It is precisely at this point that the argument from prophecy is of most avail, and meets the sceptic upon his own ground. The sceptic himself allows† that a prophecy fulfilled is neither more nor less than a miracle. It is, in fact, the sure and certain sign of a supernatural knowledge, in the very same manner, and to the very same extent, in which a common miracle is the sign of extraordinary power; and the founder of a new and a holy religion who predicts the future, and whose predictions are fulfilled, gives us as convincing and miraculous a proof of the divine origin of that religion he proclaims, as by the restoration of sight to the blind. For he who opens the eyes of the blind, and he who opens the womb of futurity do alike make men to see what they had never seen before, and never otherwise would have been able to see. If then we can prove in a manner which ought to bring the satisfaction of the

* See Discourse IV.

† “ Indeed all prophecies are miracles.” HUME.

sceptic himself, that the spirit of prophecy rested upon Jesus, we shall have given a testimony to his mission which he cannot but admit. If we bring before his view a prophecy of our Saviour fulfilling or fulfilled, we answer his own demand. We make him spectator of a miracle, and give him that, of which he talks so much, the testimony of experience to the reality of a miraculous event. We do more.—We render also every other miracle of our Saviour a probable occurrence, and capable of being established into certainty by the application of the commonest rules of evidence ; and thus prove that the unequivocal and disinterested testimony of the Evangelists is as sufficient to prove the reality of the miraculous as the ordinary works of our Lord. For it is highly reasonable to suppose, that he who has done one miracle may also have done more. It thus appears that one of the most signal advantages of the spirit of prophecy is, as the Apostle expresses it to be, “the testimony of Jesus,” to every generation—to supply, by the continued wonder of its fulfilment, the cessation of miraculous powers in the Church—to convince every age not only of the probability but of the reality of the astonishing works of Jesus, and throw in such a flood of light and certainty upon the human and historical testimony in his favour, as to make it irresistible to every unprejudiced mind.

Now of the prophecies of our Saviour there are various kinds recorded in the Gospel.

First, There are some of our Lord's predictions which embraced but a very small portion of the future in their terms, and whose completion therefore was often immediate and almost momentary. Jesus said unto Peter, "Verily I say unto thee, That this night before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." The cock crew, "and Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly."* On another occasion, he said unto them, "Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you bearing a pitcher of water, follow him into the house where he entereth in. . . . And he shall shew you a large upper-room furnished, there make ready.—And they went and found as he had said unto them; and they made ready the passover."† I could produce a thousand examples of a similar kind, so varied in their nature, so minute in their reference, and so intimately interwoven with the surrounding narrative, that an unprejudiced mind would feel it impossible to reject their testimony to Jesus. But still they are not exactly adapted to our present purpose, nor sufficiently convincing

* Matt. xxvi. 34, & 75. † Luke xxii. 10, 12, 13.

to tell upon the perverseness of modern infidelity. Both in these and many other similar cases the prediction and its fulfilment rest upon the same testimony. The fulfilment, therefore, cannot properly or conclusively be made use of to establish the credibility of that testimony. If a man bear witness of himself, his witness is nothing in a doubtful case. It is where the words of a prophecy, and the fact of its completion are related by different individuals, or drawn from different and independent sources, that they can be brought forward with the greatest triumph as proofs. We must pass on, therefore, to some other examples of alleged prescience in Jesus.

In the second place, then, there is a class of the predictions of our Lord, which, instead of being confined to the compass of a few hours or years, imply his knowledge of things to come, even in the very end of the world and time. He speaketh thus. * “When the Son of Man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.” And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall

* Matt. xxvi. 31.

the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Herein have we revealed to us the hidden things of the Almighty; the glory, the circumstances, the sentence, and the name of the judge who shall pronounce their final doom upon the evil and the good. But who can know these things of God, save God himself, and those to whom he hath vouchsafed to reveal them. Such, then, also ought to be our conclusion here. There is no sign of falsehood or of ignorance—no trace of enthusiasm; no wild workings of the imagination; no gaudy metaphors—no lofty language—no artificial rhetoric—to show how he laboured in the conception and utterance of his thoughts. Jesus speaks as one familiar with the scene. The subject seems within his comprehension and his grasp. There is no darkness or indistinctness in his picture. Truth and light and reality are impressed upon every part; and we feel in the composure, and the simplicity, and the minuteness and the reasonableness of the delineation, a convincing evidence, that he was speaking according to his experience, and knew both what he did say and whereof he did affirm. But strong as this

internal evidence is, it is yet a sort of evidence to which the sceptic will refuse to bend his stubbornness or waywardness. He will perhaps tell us, that, however probable, this prophecy is as yet unfulfilled, and may never be fulfilled at all. Or he will transmute it into a mere figurative representation of the existence of a future state of retribution, which he will say might have been learnt from philosophy alone. We must bring the infidel, therefore, to some class of prophecies where there is no room for conjecture, and where the certainty of the prediction having preceded the event, and the certainty of the event having fulfilled the prediction, leave him no other conclusion than this—that the utterer of the prediction foresaw and spake of the event, ere it did come to pass.

Now of this third species of prophecies, we shall find two instances most particularly pre-eminent, in the declarations which our Lord is recorded to have made; first, with regard to the utter and eternal destruction of the city of the Jews; and, secondly, with regard to the establishment and perpetuity of the Christian Church. These prophecies comprehend the whole period of time and events from the moment in which they are said to have been uttered, down to the final and universal triumph of the kingdom of Christ. Part of both has already been fulfilled. Part of both is

fulfilling under our own eyes, and part still remains incomplete; and thus altogether they present a chain of proof which must bind down the infidel to meet the real question and leave him no subterfuge or escape, by urging the possibility of deception. To these two prophecies, then, it is; that I would now turn your attention, and though both have been so frequently illustrated, I must confess that I never turn to them again without gathering new confidence in my faith, and new hope in my calling.

1. To know the future, as it relates to this world, is, in general, only to know more of the wickedness and wretchedness of this world than other men do, and thus to add one more to the many complicated and unavoidable causes of human grief. It was so with the man of God when standing before Hazael, and foreboding the evil which he would bring upon Israel, he fixed his countenance upon him stedfastly until he wept. It was so with Jesus when, standing before Jerusalem, he foresaw that her house would be left unto her desolate.—“When he was come near,” says the Evangelist St. Luke,* “he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from

* Luke xix. 41.

thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round about, and keep thee in on every side; and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." "In those days," as he afterwards observes,* "there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people; and they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden under foot of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

The accomplishment of this prophecy of our Saviour in the full and final destruction of Jerusalem and her inhabitants and in their present state, forms one of the most interesting and instructive portions of the history of the world which can fall under the contemplation of a Christian, and it is this fulfilment which we are now to proceed to consider, so far as it may tend to confirm our faith and improve our virtue. To enter into all the various and minute particulars which were foretold and suffered, would carry me far beyond the limits of custom and propriety. It will

* Luke xxi. 23.

be enough, to make a few remarks upon some of the most singular and striking circumstances, and then to draw from them those instructions and warnings which they so powerfully enforce.

First of all, then, it is impossible not to mark the care and goodness of God, in recording the fulfilment as well as the words of this memorable prophecy. We have before observed, that, to give to the completion of any prophecy its full force as an argument in favour of the prophet's divine authority, it would be better that the completion should be recorded by some individual distinct from the promulgator of the prediction itself, and the more unconnected the two individuals are, the more conspicuous will be the testimony. Now this is most completely the case here. The same Providence by which these events were made known unto Jesus, and the same spirit by which he was commissioned to reveal them to mankind, raised up from among the very Jews themselves, a being, who was as yet unborn when the prediction was delivered, to relate its accomplishment in every part, and confirm to the latest generations the truth of the Gospel. Josephus was by birth an Israelite, and by the accidents of his life an eye-witness of all the misery which befel his country and his brethren, and so clear and comprehensive is the account which he has given us

of the nature of their sufferings, that there is not one single expression of our Saviour, in the passages I have quoted, which does not appear to have been exactly and literally fulfilled. The resemblance, indeed, is sometimes so strong that the very words of the history and of the prophecy are almost the same. Yet there cannot here be the shadow of a suspicion as to the faithfulness of the testimony, or to any interpolation in the works of Josephus. For the correspondence in this case pervades the whole tissue of his writings, and before we can tear away the support he gives to the fulfilment of the prediction against Jerusalem, we must destroy the entire web of his history. Least of all, however, could it be the intention of Josephus thus to bear witness to the authority of Jesus. The historian was the enemy of the prophet and of his religion; and has studiously avoided, as we have already pointed out, and as far as the fidelity of his narrative would permit, every mention of those circumstances which might have a tendency to increase the prevalence of the Christian sect. There is much force and much reason for thankfulness in this observation, because it teaches us the superintending wisdom of our heavenly Father in overruling the words, as well as the works of man, and his abundant kindness in supplying us with the best and most unsuspecting means of becoming acquainted with the minutest occur-

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rences in that portion of the revolutions of the world, which, of all others, it is, perhaps, the most important for us to know.

The first of the woes which our Saviour pronounced upon Jerusalem was, that she should suffer the evils of a siege. “The days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side.” There could not be a more plain and distinct description of a besieged city, nor could language more accurate have been found to describe the actual state of the city of Jerusalem when, for the fifth and last time, she was taken by foreign foes. Cæsar and his host did encompass her round, and to prevent all hope of escape to her miserable children, they began and accomplished in the space of three days, the mighty task of surrounding her with a wall, which went out from the camp of the enemy and returned to it again; and every avenue to flight was guarded, both by night and by day, with the utmost caution and a perpetual vigilance. Are not these the words of Jesus, “They cast a trench about her, and kept her in on every side?”

The second particular to which our Saviour directs the attention of his disciples is, the complete success which would attend the efforts of the

enemies of Jerusalem. "They shall" not only "keep thee in on every side," says he, "but they shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another. There shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people, and they shall fall by the edge of the sword." Many cities have been taken and afterwards flourished in all their former splendor and magnificence; and many nations have been subdued without feeling the vengeance of the conquerors. Jerusalem herself had already four times fallen into the hands of strangers, and yet survived or risen again from her ruins. Pompey had triumphed with his Romans over the land, and yet sent forth no angel of destruction, no decree of blood. He vanquished, but he spared. But here we have a positive prediction of that which no Roman example could have taught men to expect, the utter desolation of the city when taken, and an express condemnation of her inhabitants to slaughter and the grave. And it was so. Flame and famine, and pestilence and division, and the sword, were, day by day, slaying their thousands, and ten thousands, in her streets; and young and old, and women and children, became the victims of one indiscriminate ruin. Truly "there was distress in the land, and wrath upon that people" in those

days, and grievously “ they did fall by the edge of the sword.”

Worn out and weakened, at length, by the excess of their misery, and the slaughter of the destroying angel, the enemies of Jerusalem prevailed, and she was given over into the will and power of strangers. It was their wish, and one would have thought it might have been in their power, after they had taken her, to have spared her beauty and her splendor, and to have preserved her buildings and her temple untouched and uninjured, as a monument to posterity of the greatness and the might of those by whom she had been vanquished. But a stronger hand than theirs—the hand of God, and the word of him who ruleth in the kingdoms of men according to his own will and not theirs, were against her. Her towers, her walls, her palaces, the beautiful gate of her temple and her holy place were all thrown down and laid even with the ground. Even the very foundations of the city and the temple were dug up, and the ploughshare passed over the glory of that house which the wisdom of Solomon had built, and the wisdom of Jesus adorned. That holy tabernacle, before which the Redeemer worshipped and the Redeemer taught, we know not now with certainty where it was; for in deed and in truth they have *not* left in

her “one stone upon another” to tell the traveller the exact spot upon which the beauty of these goodly buildings stood. Each conjectures for himself and satisfies nobody. Man then laboured to avert, as I have said, a destruction so signal and sad, but he laboured in vain, because he laboured against the sure word of prophecy. It came to pass, as the Lord had spoken, and because the city of David knew not the hour of her visitation, that “behold her house is left unto her desolate.”

Thus fully, thus literally, thus awfully, were accomplished the predictions of our Saviour upon the city over which he wept; and much there is in what we have already considered, to bow down the pride of the most stubborn heart in humble reverence before the authority of the Gospel. But we have not finished the theme of triumph. We have still to examine what is to us the most wonderful and irresistible part of the prophecy—that part I mean whose accomplishment is taking place in our own days, and though still fulfilling, is still unfulfilled. “Thy children,” says Jesus, “shall not only fall by the edge of the sword, but they shall also be led away captive into all nations” and have dominion in the land of Israel no more, until the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his

Christ ; “ Jerusalem shall be trodden under foot of the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled,” saith the Lord. Is it so? Here is a positive and perpetual fact proposed to mankind as a test and sign by which every one may judge of the truth of the Gospel by which he lives. It is long since the ruin of Jerusalem, and many years and ages have passed away since they laid her even with the ground, and her children within her; and the unbeliever, who loveth darkness rather than light, may, perhaps, doubt or deny the evidence we have hitherto produced. He may talk of the possibility of the prophecy being framed after the event—or he may throw out any other of those numerous insinuations in which scepticism so largely deals. But here is a living witness to confound his plausibilities, and prove that whenever and by whomsoever written, it is, in truth, a prophecy. Jerusalem is and has been trodden under foot of the Gentiles ever since the day of her desolation, and, as yet, the time of the Gentiles has not been fulfilled. Roman Gentiles annihilated the city and policy of the Jews, and Christian or Mahometan Gentiles succeeded to their inheritance. This is not chance, this is not accident, but providence. The ruler of the Roman world* did once, in the madness of pre-

* The attempt and failure of the Emperor Julian to rebuild Jerusalem and its temple, are well known, and have been treated in a masterly manner by Warburton.

sumption, endeavour to contravene this decree, and did set up his counsel and might against the denunciation of the Ruler of the kingdom of heaven; but his counsel and his might were brought to nought. With all the power of the Roman world at his command, he did fail; and whether we attribute his failure to a miraculous or an ordinary cause, the fact still remains the same. Even to this very moment, Gentiles, neither of the race nor the religion of Judah, are the masters of Jerusalem, and her faded splendor and her ruined walls too plainly speak how cruelly and disdainfully they have trodden her under their feet. Jerusalem is in her adversity; but wasted as she is, she yet bears, in her lost estate, an everlasting testimony to the Gospel of our God; and her children also bear witness with her. Go where you will, and in every nation under heaven, in the east and in the west, in the north and in the south, in the snowy mountain and in the sandy desert, in every city and almost in every village, you will behold the face of some exiled Israelite, fulfilling, in his destiny, the prophecy of the Lord. There is something peculiarly remarkable and apparently providential in this *universal* dispersion of the people of God. They are to be found in all nations, and in all nations they are found despised and rejected of men, without a home and without

a country; without the rights or the protection of other citizens. Still there are some places in which they are less hated and oppressed than in others; and under the mild and paternal government of our native land they have nothing to fear and less to suffer than in any other country in the world. Why then do they not gradually quit those lands of their oppressors to seek for safety in this rock of comparative refuge and peace. It is the common dictate of human nature to flee from distress and seek comfort and security wherever they may be found, no matter in what country or in what clime. Why then does not the Jew avoid the fury of a German populace, the barbarity of the chieftains of Africa, and the grinding exactions of Turkish avarice, by raising the tabernacle of his rest under the influence of the freedom and protection of Britain's laws? Or why, if in all countries he is condemned to suffer—why does he not turn his steps towards the land of his fathers after which he sighs, and endeavour to console his sorrows by living and dying in that Judea, and beside that Jordan, which he loves? Such would be the natural conduct of common men. But the Jew acts not thus. Oppressed and persecuted, he still continues to live where he has lived, and grows and multiplies in adversity without the thought of change. Neither tribulation, nor anguish, nor

hatred, nor distress, nor even the fear of death itself can drive him away from the soil in which chance has planted the habitation of his misery. Now it is for this singularity in his conduct that we have to account. That the Jew alone should remain uninfluenced by those motives which operate upon the mass of mankind; that the Jew alone should act contrary to our general experience of the rest of the world, to what can we ascribe it, but to the providential dispensation of God? Why is it, but that he is immoveably fixed and rooted, as it were, by the never-failing word of prophecy, to the soil on which he dwells? Why is it that he flees not back to the land of his fathers, but because Jesus hath said, that he shall be led captive into "all nations." And why does he not strive for the possession of Jerusalem again, but because the same Jesus hath said, that "Jerusalem shall be trodden under foot of the *Gentiles*, until the time of the *Gentiles* be fulfilled." Yea, and for the same reason it is, that he that did once strive to restore it to these children of vengeance, did strive in vain.

I here close the comparison between the prophecy of Jesus and the history of Jerusalem and the Jews; and now let us turn to the application and doctrine which it affords.

The tale is melancholy indeed, but it is deeply instructive also. It confirms the validity of the other evidences for Christianity beyond the reach of cavil, and gives to the name and faith of the Christian a firmness and a dignity which none of his adversaries shall be able to cast down. They may talk of conjecturing from reason and the nature of the case, that Jerusalem when conquered, would remain subject to her victors; but the remark is idle and inapplicable. The prediction uses not the language of conjecture and probability, but of assurance and certainty. It says not interrogatively, “and shall she not be trodden under foot of the Gentiles?” Neither does it speak doubtingly, as if she might; but it declares positively that she “*shall* be trodden under foot of the Gentiles.” Again, it limiteth a certain time for her humiliation, saying, “Until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” This positiveness as to the fact, united with this limitation as to the time, is after the manner, not of a reasoner, but of a prophet; and all the testimony, therefore, which the spirit of prophecy can bear to an individual, it bears to the Author of this prediction. What the precise nature and value of that testimony may be, must be left for consideration in a future discourse. I have found it so pleasing, and perhaps so easy a task, to lengthen out the comparison between the history

of Jerusalem, and the prediction of Jesus that I can only venture, before I conclude, to notice two of the moral inferences to which it leads.

The first of these is, that we learn from it a lesson of the purest and most exalted patriotism. Twice only is it written in the Gospel that Jesus wept. Once was for the death of Lazarus whom he loved, and once for the destruction of the city which hated him ; and therein he has taught us the greatness and the depth of that love which we too should bear unto the land of our nativity. It is not because our efforts are unrewarded, or our talents unpraised. It is not because we rise not in our professions and reach not the honours and emoluments at which we aim, that we are permitted to shrink from the duty of loving our country or doing it good.—So long as we can be useful to the age and generation and country in which we are born, so long must we labour with fidelity in our appointed station, even though it be through hatred and calumny and scorn. We are not to measure our love to others by their love to us, because even publicans and sinners do the same. I know no political virtue which is more neglected than this. It is the fashion of common patriots to pray for the peace of Jerusalem only whilst they are walking in the sunshine of her favour ; only whilst they rule her counsels

or are fed by her bounty. When injured they forget her benefits, decry her institutions, and no longer feel an interest in her fate. But Jesus thought and acted otherwise. "I say unto you, Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven." These had been the words of Jesus, and by transplanting the graces which he recommended into the works of his life, he shewed that he was indeed the child of his Father which was in heaven. For he did do good to the country that despised him. He did bless them that cursed him, and did pray for the people that evilly entreated and persecuted him even unto death. He did love the city that hated him—even in her unkindness he loved her, and mourned, as a patriot, over those coming days of vengeance, which, as a prophet, the page of futurity unfolded to his view. He beheld her beauty, he remembered her iniquity, he foresaw her punishment, and tears of pity and of anguish fell from his eyes, when he did think upon her fate. Yet what had Jerusalem done for Jesus that he should thus feel and express for her the tenderness and affection of a son? He had not where to lay his head; and yet she gave it him not. He was despised and rejected of men; and yet she received him not. Nay, even in that very hour in

which he was thus wishing for her conversion, and weeping for her woes, he might almost have seen, from the Mount of Olives, on which he stood, her rulers corrupting the traitor to betray his Master, and almost have heard the workman putting his hand to the hammer, and the hammer to the nail, to form the cross upon which he was to suffer for mankind. Jerusalem had ever been the enemy of Jesus, and she was now about to become his ruin and his grave; and this he knew; and yet, "when he was come near he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known even thou, in this thy day." Oh, that even thou my persecutor and my murderer hadst known before it be too late, "the things which belong unto thy peace," for then might I have been blessed in seeing thee converted, and saved from the evil hour! He looked upon her wickedness and wretchedness, and he wept for, and warned her of both; and the sadness of his soul may be gathered both from his manner and his language. Thus was the salvation of his country, the desire of the heart, and the prayer of the lips, as it had ever been, the labour of the life, of the injured Jesus; and we may search in vain amongst the records of mankind for any equal example of love to the land of our nativity.

But the city of David had closed her eyes that

she could not see, and shut up her ears that she could not hear, the things which belonged unto her peace. In the hardness of an impenitent and unbelieving heart, she crucified her Saviour and her God, and all was fulfilled, from the greatest even unto the least of the woes which had been denounced upon her: and hence it is, that we gather the second of our moral inferences—that we may read in the ruin of Jerusalem a warning, to beware of Jerusalem's sins. The woe was indeed for her, and for her inhabitants alone; but the moral is for us and for our children for ever. For what were the Jews? A nation. So are we. A nation to whom the oracles of God were committed. Why, so are we. A nation who had every means afforded to them of improving the gift. And so have we. A nation who neglected to improve the gift unto their own salvation, and were therefore visited, in vengeance, with calamity and death. And so also may we be visited unless we cease from their sins. They despised the religion and person of Jesus. They would none of his counsel and they obeyed none of his commandments, and they gave no heed unto his words, and no reverence unto his name. They rejected and crucified the Lord of Life, and filled up the measure of their forefathers' iniquity; and behold they are driven as wanderers over the face of the whole earth. Sins, like theirs, may be

done in every age ; and sufferings like theirs, may fall upon any nation. To despise the religion and the person of the Son of God ; to deny his divinity ; to forget his laws ; to hate his followers, and to crucify the Son of God afresh in the wickedness of our lives—are crimes which are confined to no rank, or station, or country ; and it is always in the will of a Holy, and the power of an Almighty God, to punish the evil-doers for the evil they have done. The Gentile, as well as the Jew, may sin against his Redeemer and his God ; and, like the Jew, be scattered abroad in the breath of God's anger ; and this city, in whose goodly buildings we glory and we dwell, may forego the things which belong unto her peace, as easily as the city of Jerusalem did ; and like that devoted city, may be levelled with the ground, and her children within her. For what merit hath the Gentile more than the Jew ; or what city of the earth can have more claims for mercy, than the towers and the temple of Jerusalem ? This record at least we must bear unto the nation, that Jerusalem was the chosen seat, and the Jews the chosen people of God ; and I never think of the glory of their descent and their election, without feeling for them the reverence which is due to an elder brother in the faith. I never meet with one of these monuments of God's indignation and wrath, walking in loneliness through

the streets and multitudes of a mighty population, without turning my mind instinctively to the words and warnings of St. Paul.* “If God spared not the natural branches, take heed, lest he also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. For because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not therefore high-minded, but fear.” Trust not in the sophisms of human reason, the weakness of human strength, or the frailty of human virtue; but fear—fear to offend the Maker, the Redeemer, the Judge of all. Fear to forfeit the gentle and enlightening influences of the Sanctifier. Fear to tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. But, above all, fear the loss of your own immortal souls; and fear to depend, for their salvation, upon any thing but the sacrifice of the Cross, and the merits, and the mediation, and the power of Jesus Christ; “for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.”† Remember also, lastly, that the vices of Jerusalem were the very cause of its ruin, the source from which its misfortunes sprung, and by which its evils were aggravated and enlarged. Her

* Rom. xi. 21, 22, & 20.

† Rom. xi. 36.

perversions of Scripture; her pollution of the fountain of truth; her reliance upon man and herself; her pride, her worldliness, her wickedness; her false, her carnal, her ambitious views of the Messiah's character, were the origin of all that fatal obstinacy in error, and of all that incurable blindness to better and holier things which brought upon her a load of such merited wretchedness, as neither the warnings of her Saviour, nor the wishes and labours, even of her enemies, were able to avert. "His blood be upon us, and upon our children," was the fearful imprecation of these lost ones upon themselves; and the vengeance they called for, it came. These are memorials for every generation of man to muse upon, and speak to us in a language, which if we will but think, we cannot but understand; a caution to watch with a godly sincerity over our waywardness, to beware of the corruptions of human reasoning, to subdue the thoughts into an early obedience to the doctrines of Scripture, to hold fast to the naked simplicity of the Gospel, and to guard the genuine truth of God with uninterrupted care and diligence, lest, after having often desired to gather us under his wings, and we would not, he should at last cast us away utterly from his presence, and our house, like that of Jerusalem, should be left unto us desolate.

DISCOURSE XI.

REV. chap. xix, ver. 10.

“ The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

II. I COME now to the second of those predictions of our Saviour to which I alluded, as bearing testimony through every succeeding generation, that he was indeed endued with the spirit of prophecy, and as affording to the sceptic an experimental solution of those doubts, which he professes to entertain with regard to the probability of real miracles.

It is not always, though it is most generally, the case, that scenes of suffering and distress are presented to the view of the prophet in his visions. The world is a state of mingled happiness and misery; its history a series of mingled disappointment and success. Whilst our Saviour, therefore, with one glance of his foreboding eye beheld the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dis-

persion of her people, because they had rejected his person and despised his claims; another and a more consolatory view presented to his mind the picture reversed; and he looked with the triumph of a spiritual conqueror upon the gradual rise and progress of his religion, and the perpetuity of its existence upon the earth under every trial, and against all opposition. He looked upon the victory of the Gospel over the prejudices of the Jew, the contempt of philosophy, the persecution of power, and the offences of weak or perverted brethren; and rejoicing in spirit at the glory of the prospect, broke forth into the language of holy gladness and divine assurance. "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."* Here we have a prediction, which comprehends the entire history of the Christian Church, from its first foundation to its final triumph, and which has been fulfilled in its former and is still fulfilling in its latter part, with a clearness which leaves no room for hesitation as to its having proceeded from one who could look into the ages which hereafter should be, and, contemplating the future, as an historian

* Matt. xvi. 17, 18.

does the past, could speak of the things which were not yet, as though they had already been.

To the former part of this prediction, which speaks of the foundation of the Christian Church, no less than three several interpretations have been assigned by different commentators, in every one of which it has pleased the goodness of God that, for our satisfaction, it should be fulfilled. Some have conceived that when our Saviour spoke of the rock upon which the Christian Church should be built, he pointed and referred to himself, as the only true and spiritual rock of believers in every age; and this exposition may be fully justified by the language of St. Paul,* who solemnly warns the Corinthians against laying or building on “any other foundation than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Unusual also as may appear the manner in which our Lord is thus supposed to allude to himself, it is completely sanctioned by his expressions in another and very memorable prophecy. “Destroy this temple,” said Jesus to the Jews, “and in three days I will raise it up.”† Now this they understood of the temple of Jerusalem; but this “he spake of the temple of his body,” says the Evangelist, which they did destroy, and which he did raise up again from the

* 1 Cor. iii. 11.

† John ii. 19—21.

dead. Whether, therefore, we consider the form or the meaning of the phrase, this exposition may be allowed to be both critically admissible and substantially true. The words will bear the sense alleged, and in that sense were strictly fulfilled. Jesus is indeed the rock of the faith of his Church, the only solid foundation upon which all we live by and look to is built.

By a second class of interpreters, this rock of foundation for the Church is applied to that doctrine of the Messiahship and divinity of Jesus, which was contained in the confession of Peter. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," said that Apostle. "And upon this rock I will build my Church," answered the Lord, and this faith is indeed the foundation of the whole building of Christianity. "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" asked the Ethiopian eunuch?* And Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered, and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." This is the very confession, and these are almost the very words of Peter. Here then we have another interpretation in which the expressions of our Lord may be fairly taken, and were legitimately fulfilled; for upon this belief in the Messiahship and derivation of Jesus from God, as upon a rock,

* Acts viii. 36.

the living stones of the temple of his body, the members of the Church, which is the assembly of the first-born, both ever have been, and ever must be built.

There is still a third, and perhaps a more probable interpretation than either of the former, which considers St. Peter himself as the foundation-stone of the Church of Christ. "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock" or stone "I will build my church," was at once a promise and a prophecy from Jesus. Now the intimacy in which the two ideas are connected together, and the pointedness of the allusion to the name of Peter "which is by interpretation a stone,"* immediately and almost necessarily persuade us to regard the Apostle as the object intended to be designated under that peculiar emblem. Nor was the fulfilment less conspicuous than the propriety of the denomination; for by the efforts of Peter were formed the first beginnings both of the Jewish and Gentile Church.

But why should we be compelled to confine ourselves to any one of these modes of interpretation, when it is evident, first, that Jesus in the boundlessness of his wisdom might contemplate them all, and, secondly, that the prediction was

* John i. 42.

not only literally and separately fulfilled in each, but that the original foundations of the Christian Church were laid in the combined completion of the whole. It was Peter who first lifted up his voice on the day of Pentecost,* and let all the house of Israel know that God had made that same Jesus, whom they had crucified, “both Lord and Christ.” Such was the substance of those many words with which he “did testify and exhort” the men of Judea to repent and be baptized; and by the piercing power of this appeal “they were pricked to the heart, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”† Now this we are authorised to consider as the very first foundation of the Christian Church, not only because it is the first instance of the conversion of any considerable number of persons to the faith of Jesus as the Messiah, but also because it seems to have been regarded, by the sacred writers themselves, as the first regular formation of Christians into a distinct religious body. Frequently as the word Church is to be met with in the pages of the New Testament, we meet with it but twice throughout the whole of the Gospels. Once it is introduced as a prophetic designation of that Church which should afterwards be formed, and a second time as a common designation of any religious body.

* Acts ii. 36.

† Acts ii. 41.

It is never applied as an historical denomination to the visible assemblies of the followers of Jesus upon earth, until *after* this extensive conversion on the day of Pentecost. When the writer of the Acts of the Apostles speaks of the three thousand who were convinced by the first preaching of Peter on that day, he speaks of them only as being added to the *Apostles*. But when he proceeds, in the conclusion of the very same Chapter, to notice the succeeding triumphs of the Gospel, he speaks of these additional members as being united to the body of a *Church* already existing. “And the Lord added,” says he, “unto the *Church* daily such as should be saved;” * thus intimating, by this change in the manner of his expression, the moment at which he conceived the foundations of the Christian Church to have been laid, and fixing that moment to the first preaching of the Messiah by Peter.

Take the prediction, then, in what sense you will—contemplate it under every different and possible view, and still it will be found that it was strictly fulfilled, and that not only was the Church originally built upon the Apostle Peter himself, but upon the very words of his confession, and upon the belief of that holy doctrine which they

* Acts ii. 47.

contained, namely, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

I have entered into this dry, and perhaps tedious, enumeration of the various meanings of the words, in order to direct your attention to the singular contrast which their obscurity presents to our view, when compared with the clearness of the denunciations of calamity upon Jerusalem. Then every woe was uttered, as if it had been already endured, with all the soberness of reality, and in all the simple solemnity of sadness. Sorrow seems to have mellowed down the prophet into the historian, and “Thy house is left unto thee desolate, and thy children shall fall by the edge of the sword,” are expressions whose meaning it were idle to doubt, and impossible to misunderstand. We have only to change the tense from the future into the past, in order to turn the prefigurations of prophecy into the language of narrative. But all is altered when, instead of mourning over the suffering of his enemies, the speaker comes to describe the first planting of his own religion. The natural obscurity of the prophetic style immediately returns, and it is only by searching out their fulfilment in succeeding events, that we are enabled to remove the ambiguity of the metaphors. Wherefore this difference, and why are all the gloomy horrors of the

first prediction laid bare before the aching eye, whilst the glories of the other are so deeply veiled? Why, but for reasons of infinite wisdom, and because God, in his goodness, would so write his words, as well as perform his works, that they might be justified to man. The object of our Saviour in predicting so openly the destruction of Jerusalem was, to warn his disciples to flee from the danger of her accursed walls, and the fulfilment of the denunciation was to be effected by Roman power, and recorded by a Jewish pen. The more definite and simple, therefore, were the expressions employed, the more remarkable would appear the subsequent accomplishment, and the more deeply and distinctly would the exhortation operate upon the hearers at the time. But the prognostic of the Church's triumph seems rather to have been called forth by the feelings of momentary gratification at the confession of Peter's faith, and was to be both produced and related by those very Christians to whom it was addressed. The prediction, therefore, was expressed in terms of such comparative ambiguity, as to remove every suspicion of its having suggested its own accomplishment, and in order to prove to the satisfaction of any reasonable mind, that there was no connivance between the reporter of the prediction and the narrator of its fulfilment. We are left to gather the fact of that accomplishment

from a painful examination of the history of the Church. Had such collusion existed, the meaning and completion would have been distinctly pointed out by the Evangelists themselves, and not intimated with such faintness and obscurity, as to elude the discovery of an ordinary observer. The manner of uttering these two predictions, then, is completely different; but in both it is so adapted to the circumstances of the case, that the air of probability would be injured even by the most trivial alteration. An obscure prediction of the ruin of Jerusalem would have defeated the purpose of a warning, and a distinct explication of the sense in which Peter was to become the rock of foundation for the Church, would have given an opportunity to the Infidel to assert, that he had framed his conduct with a direct view to its fulfilment.

Thus much have I said for the confirmation of faith in them that believe; and now let me proceed in the more laborious and less hopeful task, of endeavouring to pour conviction into the hearts of them that believe not.

For this purpose we have a powerful and persuasive argument in the concluding part of the prediction under review. Christ says not only, "I will build my Church," but adds, I will so

build it, that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Here we have both the form and matter of a prediction of deep importance. Here there is no hesitation, no conjecture, no reasoning upon the nature of the case, no probability as to what might hereafter come to pass, nothing ambiguous, nothing of doubtful interpretation. There is no “if” to abate the certainty, no “until” to limit the period of the Church’s existence. All is positive assurance and unconditional assertion. The prophet, as Paul says of Esaias, “is very bold,” and pronounces an absolute decree of perpetuity upon his religion. Be the gates of hell what they may—call them the powers of spiritual wickedness in high places, or the powers of destruction and the grave from the deep—against the Church they shall never prevail. The heavens shall be shrivelled into a scroll, the elements melt with fervent heat, the world have its end, time fade into eternity, and death, that hath the keys of the gates of hell, and that hath put all things under his feet, shall himself be swallowed up in victory, and deliver up his dominion in the conscious inability of treading down the Redeemer’s building. Tongues shall cease, and knowledge vanish away, but the Church, like charity, shall never fail, and that which has been begun on earth, shall be perfected and perpetuated in Heaven.

Such is the full and almost appalling import of the words of this everlasting promise. And has this promise been belied? The faith I hold, the Christian name I bear, the Christian ministry I exercise, this holy temple in which I stand, and ye that sit around me, and hear and bear with me so patiently in the feebleness of my reasonings against the Infidel, nay even that very Infidel himself bears witness with us all, that not one tittle of what was said hath fallen to the ground. For when the Lord declared that the gates of hell should not prevail against his Church, surely he did therein imply, that they should strive and labour to prevail. And so it hath been in every age. So it was when imperial Rome did lay bare the arm of her vengeance, and would have quenched the rising light of the Church in the blood of its saints. So it was when that imperial Rome herself did bow before the Cross, and gave liberty to the children of the Church to turn the sword against each other's bosom, and wound the peace and endanger the life of their common Mother. So it was, when in the middle ages of barbarism, an universal ignorance did overspread the face of the Roman world, and had well-nigh sunk the brightness of the Gospel-day in its own gloominess and thick mental darkness. It was so, once more, when at the period of the Reformation, philosophy broke the galling bonds of that

ignorance, and tried its newly-recovered powers in assailing the religion whose corruptions had banished it. It is so still, and every renewed attempt of Infidelity to quench, or of Heresy to obscure, the light and truth of the Gospel, is a new effort of the gates of hell to prevail against the Church, and a new fulfilment of the prediction of the Lord. For against the Church the gates of hell have never prevailed. Through all its dangers it hath struggled, and through all it hath stood. There was once a period, indeed, about some eight and twenty years ago, when the clouds of Infidelity had gathered so deep and dark, that the Gospel-day did seem at length to have come to an end, and the enemy might have triumphed, and the friend of Christianity might have trembled as he contemplated the scene. The besiegers came up against the city of the Lord to take it. The host of unbelievers came in all their might, with the trumpet of defiance, and with all the fiery darts of the wicked, and clothed with the whole armour of hell. They stood, having their loins girt about with falsehood, and having on the breast-plate of unrighteousness, and their feet shod with the preparation of the wisdom of this world; above all taking the shield of doubt, and the helmet of pride, and the sword of blasphemy, which is the word of ridicule upon sacred things, praying never, but watching always

with all perseverance to spread the dominion of the mystery of iniquity. Thus came these philosophic infidels against the Gospel, and they entered in and spoiled her for a time; and if ever there was a moment in which the wisdom of the world had an opportunity of trying its strength against the foolishness of preaching, it was then. But the word of God was with the Church, and not against it, as it had been against Jerusalem, and, therefore, the gates of hell were unable to prevail. France, indeed, had then ceased to be one of the kingdoms either of the world or of Christ. The sceptre and the cross were both driven out of the land, but yet the spoilers were unable either to retain or destroy. The distress which was in those days was most severe in that land of infidelity itself, and the wrath was most awful upon her own people; and when her own children had fallen by the sword, sufficiently to mark the just judgment of Heaven, the exiled religion returned to resume its seat, and flourish, as before, with what vigour and purity it might. But it was not the human arm, or the conquering host, which forced back the Gospel upon the land of France. It was the finger of God, making use of the very enemies of the Church, as the instruments of accomplishing his own decree; for Christianity was re-established long before the

family with which it had been driven forth was brought again to its home. It was restored even by those who had been the bitterest of its adversaries, and sheltered under the protection of that dominion of usurpation which they had set up.

Here I pause, and I ask with confidence whether the words of Jesus have not been indeed fulfilled? whether the gates of hell have not ever laboured, and ever laboured in vain, to prevail against the Church? The persecutions of Pagan Rome, and the heresies and divisions of Christian Rome; light and darkness, reasoning and reviling, knowledge and ignorance, folly and philosophy, have all united together in a fruitless conspiracy to overturn the foundations of the everlasting Gospel. Such is the fact, be the cause what it may, and such is the fact unequivocally and unhesitatingly declared to us in those words of our Saviour which we are considering.

But it is not only to the fact of the continuance of the Church that our Lord is represented in the Gospels as having directed the language of his predictions. He speaks also of its gradual, yet rapid and extensive, progress, and the silent and moral means and manner of its propagation—

“The kingdom of Heaven,” said he,* “is like unto a grain of mustard-seed which a man took and sowed in his field, which, indeed, is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.”

Now the field is the world—the grain of mustard seed is the Gospel, and the man that sowed it, is that good shepherd, “the Son of Man;” for the world is the field of his spiritual efforts and triumphs, and we are the sheep of his pasture, and he is the guide and guardian of us all. And when the seed of the Gospel was first sown, it was indeed the least of all seeds—the least of all the religions which subsisted upon the face of the earth. At the period of its planting, on the day of Pentecost, all the number of the names it could count were, says the Evangelist,† “about one hundred and twenty.” But now, by the exertion of its own vigorous principle of vitality, it has grown great, and is become a tree, and overshadows the lands; and all the creatures of those lands who did fly from religion to religion, and from philosopher to philosopher, and, like the dove which was sent forth from the ark of Noah, could find no place of certainty for their

* Matt. xiii. 31.

† Acts i. 15.

souls to rest in, save the Church which the Almighty had built, have now come and lodged their weakness in the branches thereof, and are sheltered by its shade from all the storms of ungodliness. And truly when the latter days do come, Christianity shall, in its full and final triumph, become “the greatest among” religions,—the only and the universal faith.

Another parable spake he unto them, by which he signified the gradual manner and moral means, as strongly as in the former one he had represented the rapidity of the Gospel’s progress. “The kingdom of heaven,” said he,* “is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.” The three measures of meal are the world again; for into three parts is the world several times divided in the prophetic language of the Revelation of St. John.† The leaven also is the doctrine of the Gospel, and she that hid it, is he that did proclaim that doctrine; and the hiding of this leaven implies its inconspicuous origin and early obscurity, whilst the leavening of the whole mass pronounces upon its gradual and ultimate success in that glorious hour when the kingdoms of the whole world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, and righteousness shall

* Matt. xiii. 33.

† Rev. chap. viii. & ix.

cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and they shall neither kill nor destroy in all God's holy mountain. And could words more accurately detail the nature and the mode of the Gospel's operation and influence? It came not forth, like Mahometism, with the strength of armies, and the sword of victory, and the noise of the trumpet, and the poms, and vanities, and splendors of royalty. It was so hidden at first, that in its earliest infancy we discover but few traces of its progress in the general history of the world. Its name is unknown, its nature misrepresented; but it soon begins gradually to develop its energies upon individuals and things. It creeps into houses and palaces; into cities and provinces. Kingdom after kingdom is leavened by its healing juices, until at last it seats itself upon the throne of Constantine. Barbarians invade the empire and are vanquished and leavened by the religion of the subject land. A new world is discovered beyond the limits of the ocean, and thither too Christianity makes its way with the spirit of adventure, and leavens the people of an unknown shore. And there shall be a day, for from the experience of the past we have solid hope of the future, when not a clime or a nation shall be untouched, uninfluenced, or unleavened, by its power.

Nor has the Gospel been less like to leaven in

the means, than in the gradual nature of its progress. It has not risen upon the ruins of political institutions and ancient manners, and national character, subverting every thing established to make way for some peculiar form of civil society or government under which alone it can exist. But it has mingled itself with what it found, and insinuating its renovating views of God and man into the hearts of those with whom it has come in contact, has given a new colour to their laws, and softened their nature, and improved their genius. The Koran has every where banished liberty and literature from the heads and hearts of its victims, and changed the person of the governor, and the nature of the government; but the Gospel has united itself with both, and encouraged, improved, and extended their blessings. It has been the established religion of consuls and emperors, as well as kings, in other countries, and of a Cromwell as well as a Charles in our own. Change a monarchy into a republic, as in America; change a republic into a monarchy, as in the states of Italy; divide a whole land amongst its spoilers, as in Poland; and still Christianity remains the authorised religion of the state, and the only religion of the people. It can leaven any form of government, and subsist under all.

Thus speak the Lord and the Scriptures; and thus speaks also, as far as it has had an oppor-

tunity of bearing testimony to the fact, the voice of experience in the history of mankind. Tacitus first tells us of the meanness and minuteness of the origin of the Gospel *seed*, and of the hopelessness of its increase when sown, and of its gradual growth until it had pushed its roots and spread its branches over the Roman earth. Pliny next comes forward to establish the propriety of the second similitude, and compares the progress of Christianity to a contagion which had penetrated, like leaven, not through cities only, but through villages also, and through the open country, places most remote and least liable to the fermentation of novelty.

Let us not, however, suppose that these are the mere general prognostics of success, which are uttered alike by the true and the false prophets of the world, or that our Saviour was but imperfectly acquainted with the events which should attend the propagation of his religion, or that he thought that all its history might be written in the same strain of triumph and joy. There is not one circumstance, whether of glory or of shame, which should follow the march of the Gospel, that does not appear to have met his prophetic eye. He knew what was in man. He pronounced,* “Woe unto the world because of offences; for it must

* Matt. xviii. 7.

needs be that offences come ;” and the schisms and heresies and corruptions of the Church have, in every period, abounded unto the world’s woe. He said unto his disciples :* “ In the world ye shall have tribulation,” and in the world they were buffeted and persecuted and reviled. And, lastly, he put forth unto them the parable of the tares,† and vouchsafed also to explain it for their use.‡ Tares and wheat, he declared, would both grow together in the Gospel field—the wheat as the good children of the kingdom of Heaven, and the tares as the evil children of the wicked one ; and both are to grow together till the great spiritual harvest of mercy and wrath. And such has ever been the fate of Christianity in its growth. It has ever had to meet with obstacles, to struggle with enemies, and to be almost choked by the weeds of error and dissension which spring up and are permitted to flourish even within its own holy precincts. There have been false brethren in the fold of Christ ; and they are tares, and confirm the word of Jesus. There have been infidels amongst men ; and they are tares also, and do the same. And if there be an infidel here, he too is a tare, and bears witness, by his predicted infidelity, to the authority and inspiration of that very Lord whom his infidelity would deny. God’s long-suffering is no proof of favour ; God’s per-

* John xvi. 33. † Matt. xiii. 24. ‡ Matt. xiii. 36.

mission that evil opinions should flourish is no evidence of their truth ; for the Lord hath foretold of these things. The growth of the Gospel has indeed been rapid and gradual, but never has it enjoyed a progress of uninterrupted felicity. It has always been clogged with difficulties and surrounded with danger, convincing us at once of the foreknowledge of its Author, and its own vital vigour.

Thus have we found described in these prophetic parables of our Lord a complete and lively picture of the state and progress of the Church, as it has been, as it is, and as it will be until time shall be no more. And now let us turn to estimate the nature, and measure the value, of the testimony of these fulfilments.

Now, the first general inference which we draw from the fulfilment of these prophecies is this—that they must necessarily have been uttered by Jesus in the fulness of the spirit of foreknowledge. And if so, the question as to the probability of miracles in general, and of the certainty of those of Jesus in particular, is at an end. The infidel himself allows that “a prophecy is a real miracle,” subject to the same rules and leading to the same inferences as any other wonderful work. Here then we say is prophecy, and

here, therefore, we conclude is a real miracle. The infidel may deny the existence of the spirit of foreknowledge in Jesus if he will. He may talk of conjecture, or of reasoning, or of assertions hazarded by imposture or enthusiasm, and by accident fulfilled. We can only lament the blindness of his heart, or the perverseness of his understanding, and continue to maintain, with a firmness and a resolution which the reasonableness of the opinion justifies, that the predictions of our Lord were too bold for conjecture, too positive for reasoning, and too varied and minute for mere accident to accomplish.

A second inference seems equally sure, and it is this—that it is impossible to view those prophecies of our Saviour which we have detailed, in connection with their accomplishment, and not allow that the foreknowledge in which they were uttered was of divine origin. The predictions were uttered ages ago. That is one fact undeniable and undenied. The predictions have been fulfilled in every age, and are fulfilling in our own. That is another fact of like clearness and certainty. Take, then, these two facts together, and tell me what other conclusion you can fairly draw than this, that the spirit in which the words were spoken was of God, and that their fulfilment was also of him.

For consider, that these prophecies involve in their fulfilment the truth and divinity of the whole of the religion of which they form a part. The woes which Jesus pronounced upon Jerusalem he frequently declared to be called down upon her because she knew not the hour of her visitation, and would obey none of his laws, and gave heed to none of his claims. “Did ye never read in the Scriptures,” said he, “the stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. *Therefore*, I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”* Hear also another parable which he spake. The Lord of a certain vineyard, whose husbandmen were fruitless and disobedient, said, “What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. And he sent unto them his son; but the husbandmen cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, therefore, shall the Lord of the vineyard do unto them. He shall come and destroy those husbandmen, and give their vineyard to others.”† Now the chief priests and scribes perceived that he had spoken this parable against them. “And when they heard it they said, God forbid.”‡ But God did not forbid. In all its minuteness, in all its extent,

* Matt. xxi. 42.

† Luke xx. 13.

‡ Luke xx. 16.

in all its singularity, their ruin was accomplished, and they themselves were slain, and their city made a perpetual wonder in the hands of strangers. Jesus also said, "Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." He speaks not of *a* church in general, but of his own church in particular, and of himself as its builder, and of building it upon the rock of Peter or of his confession.—And the whole of this we have seen literally fulfilled. Now, it is impossible for any man to look upon the completion of these predictions, and not think that the completion was permitted by God. It is equally impossible for any honest and unprejudiced man to suppose their completion, after having been thus solemnly appealed to by Jesus, to have been permitted by God, had not the religion in whose favour they were appealed to, been true. For by only *not* permitting their full and fair accomplishment, God would have given us the immediate means of detecting the existence of imposture and deceit. But God *has* permitted the fulfilment of those judgments which Jesus denounced upon the adversaries of his claims; and of those promises which he made of establishing his pretensions; and therein we are plainly taught that his claims ought to have been admitted, and that his pretensions were just.

Here, then, at length, we are enabled to estimate the nature, and measure the value of that testimony which his own accomplished predictions are able to bear to the truth of Jesus. They were uttered in the wisdom of the spirit of divine foreknowledge. They were appealed to as proofs of his divine mission, and by their accomplishment, therefore, they are created not only into real miracles, but divine. They are miracles which are performing in the present generation, and before our own eyes, and so demonstrate to the senses and to the experience of the men of the present and every other generation, not only the probability, but the absolute certainty, that Christianity is supported by the evidence of real and divine miracles. They may be reasoned upon also like any other miracles; and, as the Jews and the primitive Christians had an opportunity of beholding the wonderful performance of the works of Jesus, and by comparing them with his life and doctrine, were enabled to demonstrate the divine authority of his commission; so also, and with equal certainty, may we do the same, by only applying the same course of argument to the wonderful fulfilment of his prophecies. What that course of argument is, I have already pointed out in a previous Discourse;* and it is necessary,

* Discourse V.

therefore, further only to observe, first, how completely the words of the Apostle are verified, when he says, that “the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus” in every age; and, secondly, to mark the kindness of God in having given us such a sensible and everlasting illustration of the truth of our religion, and the reasonableness of our faith, and the solidity of our hopes of salvation:—for which great and unspeakable and unmerited mercy to his fallen and unworthy creatures, his holy name be praised, both now, hence forth, and for ever!

DISCOURSE XII.

Acts, chap. xix. ver. 20.

“ Mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.”

IN all that I have hitherto ventured to lay before you in defence of the truth of that religion by whose promises we are animated to the pursuits of holiness, and by whose awful terrors we are guarded against the temptations of a sinful, but seductive world; in all the Discourses which I have hitherto delivered, it has been my leading object to assign to each portion of the evidence its proper weight and place; and to shew that whilst all the various arguments have been appropriated, like the members of the human body, to the discharge of some special and important office, they have been so combined together at the same time, as to give the greatest possible degree of strength, and beauty, and order, to the whole. To compare the probable with the actual result;

to compare the mighty growth of Christianity with the mighty means which were put in force for securing the reception of its doctrines; to compare the rapidity of its progress and the permanence of its conquests with the sublimity of its precepts and the grandeur of its miracles, would now seem to present itself as a natural conclusion of these arduous labours, and to afford a favourable opportunity for considering, not only whether the success of the Gospel has been commensurate with the strength of its evidences, but also, whether it be possible to account for that success upon any other supposition than that of the truth of the religion itself, and the divine authority of its teachers.—That the positive proofs of Christianity are in their nature so unequivocal and strong as to justify the deepest prejudices of the Gentile and the Jew in bowing down before their influence, is what, from our previous investigation, we have already seen. If then the history of the triumphs of Christianity be found to correspond with those expectations which the evidences for its divine origin had raised—if we find the philosopher throwing aside the foolishness of man's reasoning to learn the wisdom of God at the lips of the lowly, and the worldly prospects of the Pharisee corrected and subdued by the spiritual consolations of the Gospel;—if we behold these changes taking place

in the opinions and feelings, not of a few isolated individuals, but of multitudes in the most bigoted and the most enlightened nations in the world; and if, after having attentively contemplated the subject, we find it impossible to attribute such numberless and wonderful conversions to any other cause than the miraculous powers and heavenly commission of the teachers of the religion, then may we safely infer that those miraculous powers, and that heavenly commission were indeed the sources of the victory of the Gospel; and by adding the subsequent fact of its success to the former proofs of its divinity, may draw, from the combination of the two arguments, a demonstration which none of our adversaries shall be able to resist.

But it is not merely when viewed in combination with the positive evidences of its truth, that the rapidity of the progress of Christianity assumes so important a character. It has a value also when separately estimated which it would be most unwise to overlook.—I am far from considering it as, in general, either a safe, or a sound method of reasoning, to rest the whole burthen of our proof upon any one particular fact; yet there are times in which the arguments from such particular facts may be urged with much greater effect than a more comprehensive and complicated

detail of evidence. The human mind is weak often in the wisest; wavering often in the firmest of God's rational creatures. There are moments of despondency and dejection, in which the understanding is averse to the vigorous pursuit of any lengthened chain of reasoning, and almost incapable of appreciating its force and application. In moments like these, the heart turns away from complex and scientific demonstration, and seeks to satisfy its doubts by some single and simple argument. It knows its own wants, its own weakness, its own wilfulness, and desires, like the children of Israel in their Egyptian distress, to have some pillar of never-failing strength to look to in all its dangers—a pillar of fire by night to console and enlighten it in the darkness of its faithless hours, and a pillar of smoke by day to protect it by its friendly shade against the pestilential rays of perverted reason. Now, there is no single argument for the divine origin and authority of the Gospel more simple or solid, and therefore no guardian more powerful against the fickleness and feebleness of the human mind, than that which is furnished by the rapid propagation of Christianity. That "mightily grew the word of God, and that mightily it prevailed," are facts to which, above all others, we may always, when assailed by the temptations of sophistry, appeal, and say, this is the rock of my confidence, and

upon this unmoveable foundation do I build the wisdom of the trust which I repose in my Redeemer. Proceed we then to examine into these facts, and to endeavour to draw from the propagation of the Gospel both a confirmation of the reasonings which we have already advanced in its favour, and a refuge for the weakness of our understanding to flee to, in those seasons of dejection and doubt, which God hath sometimes permitted to fall upon men of the most pious dispositions, and the most reasonable minds.

The progress and perpetuity of Christianity, as an argument for the truth of its claims to a divine authority, may be contemplated in two different points of view; either as a predicted, or merely as an historical fact; and in both it will appear as an evidence of the highest kind. As a predicted fact, I have already detailed its claims to your notice, and pointed out the glorious and irresistible fulfilment which it affords of the wondrous prophecies of Jesus, by growing up to majesty, like the least of all seeds, from the most hopeless of all beginnings, and by impregnating, like leaven, the whole mass of the moral and intellectual world. It only remains for me at present to view the matter in an historical point of view, and I hold, that, regarding the progress of Christianity merely as one amongst the many changes

of the world, it is impossible to refer it to any cause which is inferior to the interposition of the Almighty's arm. I view it in connexion with the circumstances of its origin, and the instruments employed in its propagation; and I say, that if we consider the place from which it sprung, the persons by whom it was preached, the dangers to which they were exposed, the difficulties they had to surmount, and the nations, and minds, and prejudices, over which they ultimately triumphed, we cannot fail to acknowledge the divinity of its author; and to allow that, having been first promulgated as the word of God, it owed its future prosperity and progress to his protection and favour.

Of all the various nations which had been successively subjected to the iron sway of Rome, the inhabitants of Judea were held as the most degraded and despised. The contempt under which they labour amongst the Christian kingdoms of modern Europe, is severe to those who suffer, and most disgraceful to those who indulge the tyranny of a sweeping censure which would condemn a whole people as unworthy to be admitted into a participation of the offices and charities of life. But in all the present sorrows of the Jew, he has the unspeakable consolation of knowing, that his religion is regarded with rever-

ence by the most unfeeling of his oppressors, and that as one of the lineal descendants of the Father of the faithful, there are none to disallow the dignity of his birth. It was not thus under the dominion of his Pagan lords. His religion and his person were alike hated and despised; and whilst his system of worship and belief was tolerated only because it was a national creed, he was placed, as an individual, amongst the lowest of those ranks which divided the citizen from the slave of the republic. Of all countries, therefore, which could have been selected for the origin of a successful and triumphant religion, Judea was the most inauspicious and improbable. Had a philosopher of Athens or an augur of Rome come forth with a code of morality as pure and faultless as the Gospel, and a series of doctrines as wise and sublime, the character and even the residence of the teachers would have secured a favourable audience for their words. Had another Socrates proclaimed his intercourse with a guardian angel as his guide, and founded the immortality of the soul upon the instructions of his heavenly monitor: had another Numa stood forth with a law of undeviating holiness, and asserted his communication with the Deity at some sacred fountain, men might have been expected to listen with eager reverence to the tale. The classic ground of Greece would seem to

make it the natural habitation of superior spirits ; and the imperial majesty of Rome to justify its selection for the peculiar favours of Heaven ; and we find, in fact, that the Romans with their usual vanity were ever ready to admit the special interposition of Providence in the fate of their mighty men, and to believe the prodigies which foretold the fate of Cæsar or his murderer. But Jesus had none of these holds upon the feelings of the world. The very accidents of his birth condemned the presumption of his prophetic claims ; and it is impossible to suppose, that heathens should be persuaded to renounce the profession of their fathers, and Romans to give up the religion of the state, in obedience to the teaching of a Jew, unless overpowered by the irresistible demonstrations of his divine authority. Even the wisest of the Jews would have been rejected by a Heathen and a Roman ; and still less, therefore, could a peasant of Israel hope, if uninspired and unassisted by God, to become the founder of a religion, which should prevail over every other system, and continue for ages to guide the practice and form the creed of every successive generation.

If our Saviour and his Apostles had so many prejudices to contend with in their spiritual labours amidst the idolaters of the Gentile world, they

had yet more serious difficulties to struggle with in their native land. If as Jews they were hateful to the haughty Roman, they were, as Galileans, yet more contemptible to Jews. “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”* was the question of one of the most sincere and least bigoted of the children of Israel, and it represents in brief but forcible terms the general sentiments of his brethren. From this neglected and suspected country, however, did the first teachers of Christianity derive their education and birth. They were no rulers in Israel adorned with the authority of office. They were not Scribes who were armed with the dignity of traditional knowledge. They were not Pharisees, who could depend upon the blind devotion of the multitudes to their sect. They were poor, friendless, illiterate, and unconnected. Their very speech betrayed to ridicule the things which they uttered, and as Galileans and Nazarenes, they were subject to censure and suspicion with all. Truth could have no hope of coming mended from tongues like theirs, and falsehood would be exposed to more certain and immediate detection. The ear that despises or doubts the competency of the speaker is seldom attentive to the wisdom he may declare, but always most studious to unveil his errors. The reception, therefore, which the Founder and

* John i. 46.

Apostles of Christianity experienced from the inhabitants of their native land, and the followers of the religion of their fathers, can be resolved into nothing but those miraculous evidences which they gave of a commission from God. The authority which their character and their country wanted, could be supplied only by the truth of what they spake, and the wonders they performed.

But it was not merely the disadvantages of country and of character against which Jesus and his Apostles had to labour. They had to struggle with a far more powerful obstacle in the very nature and subject of their doctrine. What was the substance of their preaching? Was it not this, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ of God, a carpenter of Galilee the king of the Jews? And was not this in opposition to every sentiment which prevailed in Israel? and were not all the thoughts of the people of God taught from their very youth to flow in a different channel, and to view the prophecies of the Messiah's glory as the clear and incontrovertible predictions of the blessing, and honour, and power, and dominion of this world? Had the preaching of Jesus encouraged those engrafted errors, he might have hoped, even in the humility of a peasant, and the degradation of a Galilean, to gather to himself the wishes and affections of his countrymen. But, when he

rebuked the desire of civil emancipation, and struck at the very root of the popular passions and prejudices in favour of temporal greatness; when he laid claim to the dignity of David's throne, and yet refused the splendors of his earthly crown, and was content to reign only in the hearts of his followers, we are lost in amazement at the singularity of his conduct, and wonder, not that many should have doubted, but that any should have believed. Upon the common principles by which the conduct of human beings is regulated, it is indeed impossible to account for his success without the aid and approbation of his heavenly Father. As a mere human teacher he could never have gained a footing amongst the descendants of Abraham. The early impressions of infancy, and the prevailing opinions of our kindred and instructors, it is never an easy task to shake off or to forget, however false or fatal the error we have embraced, if it has been drawn in with the first rudiments of knowledge, and implanted in our minds by the teaching of those we love. But more especially if we have learnt to regard the error as a religious truth, it obtains a force and sanctity which it would require something more than human authority to destroy. Now this was the exact case of the Jews in their mistaken notions of the Messiah's character and kingdom. What, then, or who could pretend, by

his own power alone, to correct and obliterate so inveterate a prejudice? That many of the predictions of the holy men of old were strictly and literally fulfilled in the actions of Jesus, all who reflected must have seen; but there were many predictions also, whose interpretation was attended with exceeding difficulties, and many which had long, though erroneously, been interpreted in a manner altogether inconsistent with his claims. What, then, or who could have power to prove that this inconsistency did not exist? We have already observed, that before the explanation of any difficult or disputed prophecy can become authoritative, and binding, and decisive, the expounder must be admitted to have been endued with the Spirit of God: and in this case the rule was more especially necessary. The whole body of the established priesthood, the doctors of the law, and the learned Pharisees, gave forth one sense of the ancient prophecies, sanctioned by antiquity, and believed in by all. A few humble and uneducated inhabitants of Galilee delivered another and a different sense, and triumphed in the conversion of myriads to their creed. As natural men their authority was nothing, when compared with the weight which lay in the opposite scale. The only cause, therefore, to which we can attribute their success, is to a conviction in those who believed their saying, that they

acted under a revelation from the Most High; and it would be mere idleness to maintain, that such a conviction could be engendered under such circumstances by any thing less than the exercise of miraculous powers.

If the doctrines of our Saviour and his disciples were thus obnoxious to the religious prejudices of the Jew, they had equal difficulties to endure in the philosophic notions of their Gentile converts. However obvious and reasonable the unity of God may appear to our enlightened views when examined merely as a principle of natural religion, it was far otherwise in those ages of intellectual cultivation, and spiritual blindness, in which the Gospel was proclaimed. A mere assertion of the doctrine that the “ Lord our God is one God, and that besides him there is none else,” when unaccompanied by any physical or metaphysical reasoning, could neither satisfy the multitudes, whose ideas of the Deity were sensible and gross, nor the philosophers, who demanded a demonstration for every truth, and whose ingenuity was ready to detect the weakness of every argument. But the Scriptures furnish us with no formal proof whatever of these truths. They are contented with the bare but repeated assertions of the divine unity, mingled up with the eternal generation of the Son, and the equally

mysterious procession of the Spirit. In the same manner Christianity pronounces, and upon the authority of its own declaration alone, not only the fact, but the channel, of God's mercy to the sinner, and teaches him not only to look for the pardon of his crimes, but to expect it from his faith in the sacred blood of his Redeemer. These are doctrines which the Gospel maintains with the same fulness and pertinacity as the singleness of God's nature, and the efficiency of man's repentance; and yet they are doctrines which human reason cannot discover or demonstrate, and which human authority, therefore, could not have established. The utmost which mortal understanding can accomplish is, to shew, that the doctrines of the Trinity and the Atonement being revealed to us by a prophet of God, are not unworthy of God to reveal to his prophet.

Grant, however, that the leading principles of the Gospel had no opposition to dread from the reasoning powers of man, when fairly exercised, and that in their own uncorrupted nature they are full of all grace and truth; yet we should remember, that the nature and end of Christianity were at first so misrepresented and misunderstood, that it had but little prospect of being inquired into at all, and scarce any of being fairly and impartially viewed. It was not known or be-

lieved to be a rational or even a moral system. —It laboured under a general and deep suspicion, arising from ignorance, from interest, from prejudice. It was almost universally branded in its earlier stages as an entire mass of atheism and universal unbelief. With such preconceptions against its holiness, it could entertain but feeble hope of obtaining any general inquiry into its merits, or of having that inquiry conducted in the spirit of unbiassed moderation.

But I feel that I am trespassing upon your patience by the repetition of arguments which must so often have occurred to your private reflections, and which have been so powerfully illustrated in the writings of others ; and my only excuse must be, that they are arguments of such weight, it can never be unprofitable to reflect upon them again, and that in pursuance of my appointed task, I was not at liberty to omit them, however antiquated and familiar.

Well then, instead of pursuing this beaten path in all the boundless continuity in which it might be followed, let us briefly recapitulate the parts we have traced out and sum up the conclusion of the whole matter. The Gospel could not owe its success to the reputation and human authority of its founders ; for they were calum-

niated and rejected as the outcasts of society, both at home and abroad. It could not owe its success to the reasonableness of its doctrines, when considered merely as the doctrines of men: for they are incapable of being admitted upon the strength of mere human authority, or of being proved by mere human reasoning. It could not owe its success to the readiness of the world to embrace it, either with or without a satisfactory demonstration of its truth; for it came under such a hateful and suspicious character and name, that none would have desired or descended to examine its claims. What then is the result? It is this, that as the propagation of Christianity is a work too mighty for man himself, and too holy for man's enemy, the Creator of man must have been the origin and author of its greatness. What is neither of earth, nor hell, must be of Heaven. If* *the foolish things of the world* were able to confound the wise, and *the weak things of the world* to confound the things that were mighty, and *base things of the world*, and *things which are despised*, and *things which are not*, to bring to nought things which are, it must have been because *God had chosen* them for the purpose, and endued them with the power. It is thus that Scripture reasons in its own favour upon the fact of its own progress, and comprehends, in

* 1 Cor. i. 27.

a few brief and energetic words, the substance of the most lengthened arguments of its human advocates.

Would to God that I could here terminate the inquiry; but there is no period at which scepticism is not obtruding its insinuations and doubts. Infidelity follows us even into the history of the Gospel, and would persuade us that its triumphs were less owing to the arm of the Almighty, than to some causes of a secondary and human origin.*

It is worthy of remark, that these causes, whatever be their force, are such as apply only to the propagation of Christianity amongst the Gentiles. They cannot in any degree be made to account for its original and extensive success amongst the Jews. With all but the Sadducees, *the immortality of the soul* was an admitted principle. The holy *zeal* of the Christians in the cause of truth, was equalled, if not surpassed, by the obstinate pertinacity of the Scribes and Pharisees in defence of error; and the humble *virtues* of the followers of Jesus could make but little impression on those who were taught to despise the strictest and most regular observance of the

* I allude of course, to the 15th chapter of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire."

weightier matters of the law, when unaccompanied by a diligent attention to fasts and ceremonies, to the washing of vessels and of hands. Again, the *union* and discipline of a few Galileans could produce little effect upon an established priesthood; and the chosen people of God, from their long and frequent experience in divine communications, were the very last people in the world to be seduced by *the miraculous powers ascribed to Christians*, had not those powers been in reality possessed and exercised. It becomes necessary, therefore, for those who would resolve the success of Christianity into secondary causes, to shew what causes there were of this kind to promote its original reception with the Jews: and until they have accomplished this task, it is of little avail to shew the means by which they suppose it obtained its currency with the Gentiles.

But there is, in fact, a circumstance even in the application of the argument to the Gentiles which entirely robs it of its sting. I am not disposed, like many who have written and spoken upon the subject, to deny that there are various secondary causes which did materially operate upon the Roman world in inducing them to lay hold on eternal life; but I firmly maintain that these causes are such, that had the religion not been true, and had its teachers not been inspired, and

had they not confirmed their words with signs following, they would have forfeited the whole of their influence, and the entire structure would have crumbled into dust.

Take these causes as they stand in the pages of the historian of Rome, and consider first the *zeal of the Christians*.—It is notorious to all, that the Christians at first were confounded with the Jews, and regarded only as one of their more pestilent and pertinacious sects. Now the Gentiles had long been accustomed to view, and to view unmoved, the zeal of the Jewish sects. That the Pharisees compassed sea and land to make one proselyte, we are told by other authority besides that of Scripture; but not with much success. What then could induce multitudes of the Gentiles to draw the distinction, which they did virtually draw, between the zeal of the Christian and the Pharisee, and to permit themselves to be turned by the one from Satan to serve the living God, when they had remained unconverted by the equally strenuous perseverance of the other? Both were alike exclusive; both were alike intolerant of idolatry, and condemned with unsparing severity every participation in the rites of the established religion. Whence then the difference between the effects of the two zeals? To this we can return but one answer;

that the multitude perceived that the zeal of the Christian was a zeal according to knowledge, and that he was thus zealously affected only in a thing which was good and true. And what could convince the Gentile of this, if not the sufferings or the miracles of the Christian (for he attempted not to establish his faith by philosophic reasoning), either of which, if admitted, will prove the certainty and divinity of his religion.

A similar inference may be drawn from the second of those causes to which the progress of the Gospel has been traced, I mean *the doctrine of a future life*. That the doubt and darkness which hung over the world that lies beyond the grave, when examined only by the unassisted eye of reason, should make the penitent ready to embrace any system of philosophy or of faith which could put an end to the weariness and uncertainty of his conjectures; and that thousands were actually enlisted under the banner of the cross, principally because it held forth an assurance of eternal happiness in Heaven, are facts of which I am fully persuaded. But we have still to shew the reason why these men believed the assurance which Christianity held forth. Consider the Apostles and Evangelists as without inspiration and without miracles, and what was there in the assertions of these simple individuals to produce

the belief of a doctrine which the profoundest reasonings of unaided wisdom had been found too weak to establish? Why should the words of a few fishermen of Galilee bring conviction to the mind upon that immortality of the soul which the works of the most revered of the philosophers had never been able to create? The efforts of reason had been employed for ages in a vain attempt to disseminate the doctrine of a future state. In the space of a few transitory years the foolishness of the preaching of some despised and humble Jews, secured for it a firm and a general reception; and it is impossible to account for this unusual readiness of belief, without supposing them to have accompanied their speech with some irresistible evidence of divine authority. Had these Christian promisers of eternal and unspeakable glory not sanctioned their promises by the demonstrations of the spirit and of power, men would have risen up from their preaching, as one did from the perusal of Plato, believing indeed whilst they listened, but ceasing to believe ere the voice of the preacher had ceased sounding in their ears. It is not then the mere *doctrine*, but the full *assurance* of a future life which Christianity conveys, that we are to reckon as one of the secondary causes of its success; and such an assurance could have been made sure to the

converts, in the absence of philosophic arguments, only by the testimony of some miraculous proof.

It is easy to talk of *the pure and austere morals of the Christians* as one of the reasons of the progress of the Gospel. It is a delightful and a copious theme, but never could it have contributed to the general propagation of the faith. The Christians were not allowed to possess any virtues. They were held as atheists, as immoral, as impure; and their character, therefore, would not attract, but rather repel, the penitent, whilst he who professed and called himself a Christian would be bound in obedience to his faith to be holy above all, and yet be accounted a sinner above all. In a word, he would have to undergo the difficulties, without receiving the rewards of virtue in the life that now is; and it is plain that he would never trust to the promises of reward in the life to come, without some undeniable proof of the truth and authority of the book in which they were written.

The *union and discipline of the Christian body*, too, if truly it did exist, whence could it arise in early times, and whilst the Gospel was neither protected nor ruled by the state, and when there were no Acts of Uniformity to compel, nor

any undeviating forms of faith to regulate assent,—if not from union of sentiment; and whence that universal harmony of opinion, if not from a conviction of the divine infallibility of some common document to which they appealed and from which they drew their doctrines?

We are told of *the miraculous powers* ascribed to the *primitive Church*, and I have reserved the consideration of this cause, as the most important, to the last. Now I ask, if it be possible that miraculous powers could be ascribed to the Church without being possessed by it? and if not, I shall be most ready to admit the operation of this cause.

Consider then the state of the world at the period in which Christianity appeared.

It was an age of scepticism and of the “fashion of incredulity;” and one of the brightest ornaments of ancient philosophy gloried in the uncertainties of academic doubt. Why was this “fashion of incredulity” suspended when applied to the Christian Church, so far as even to *ascribe* to it miraculous powers? Surely the general habit of scepticism would have extended itself most eagerly to those powers, had they not been supported by some undeniable proof of their reality. At no period can the unbelief of those who neg-

lect to inquire into any fact be construed into an argument against its truth. But in an age of scepticism and incredulity every single individual who believes in its occurrence affords a strong probability of his faith being founded on a solid basis.

It was an age in which the greater part of the civilized world were the subjects of one government; and this, whilst it facilitated the preaching of truth, would have facilitated also the detection of falsehood.—In some remote and secluded country an imposition might possibly rise up to maturity, and then go forth and gain an establishment in other kingdoms, because supported and sanctioned by the faith of a whole nation. But Christianity was spread over the limits of a mighty empire by the individual efforts of single teachers. In those days too the world was in a state of general peace, and men, like the Athenians, had little else to attend to but the hearing or the telling of each new thing; and being perfectly settled and secure, had neither hopes nor fears to distract them, nor any end to answer, nor any party to serve, by attributing to Christians what they did not possess. It might not have been so had Christianity appeared in the days of Cæsar and Pompey, and been embraced by either from political motives; and it was not so in after times, when each

emperor courted or persecuted the faithful, according as he desired or disregarded their support.

Lastly, it was an age in which the human mind had reached the highest stage of intellectual cultivation; and such an age, it is evident, is least favourable for obtaining credit for what does not exist. In a period of ignorance and barbarity, truth and falsehood are almost upon a level, but when the spirit and freedom of inquiry prevail, it may sometimes happen, that what is true, is rejected; but it will seldom be found that what is untrue is believed.

For all these reasons, therefore, we hold it most unreasonable to imagine, that multitudes of various nations, and in an enlightened age, should *ascribe* to the Church the miraculous powers which it never exercised; and under these circumstances we glory in attributing the conversion of the world to its *possession* of miraculous powers, as to a leading cause.

Take the matter, then, in which way you will, examine the obstacles which Christianity had to surmount, or investigate the causes by which it may be supposed to have been favoured, and you will find, that the former could never have been overcome, without the aid of Heaven;

nor the latter have been of use except the religion itself had been divinely true. "Mightily grew the word of God and prevailed," because it was the word of God, and because God made it to prevail.

With my reasonings upon evidence I have done. Yet before I quit the subject, perhaps never to resume it again, for God only knows what is written in the book of fate, I would beseech you to bear with me for a moment, whilst I speak but a few words more, and no longer to the understanding, but to the heart. It is no vain or idle inquiry, in which we have been engaged. It is no contest of mental ingenuity or eloquence; nor does it relate merely to the passing interests and pleasures of the world and the flesh. It is the fight of faith, it is the war of God, and of salvation; it is a struggle for the joy or misery of the soul for ever. As such, I have met it. I have come to it in all its awfulness. I have studied it by day, and meditated upon it by night, and poured forth upon its sacred defence the powers and the energies of the best member that I have; and God is my witness, how, in the consciousness of want and weakness, I have never ventured to come before you without having implored the aid of his eternal Spirit. Yet I feel the vastness and immensity of the

subject too great to be comprehended in all its height and depth, or be enforced in all its ineffable strength, by the limited and languid efforts of a mortal man. After all, I feel that I must have spoken often feebly, and fear that I may have spoken sometimes foolishly. Here, then, where is the termination of my duties, is the commencement of yours; and we would exhort you ever to bear in mind that those that teach, as well as those that hear, are but men; and to look with all patience and long-suffering upon their infirmities; and what you perceive to be foolish, correct in the spirit of charity; and what you hear to be feeble, receive in the spirit of meekness and docility. Lay not the errors of the advocate to the unsoundness of his cause; nor judge of it by the imperfections of his manner or his reasoning. Rather lay to heart the unspeakable importance of the question itself, and pray to God with fervency and frequency, that he would give you a right judgment in all things, but especially in that upon which eternity depends. I say not this, as in complaint for any neglect or severity I may have endured. I ought rather to pour forth my gratitude for the attention and seriousness you have bestowed. Neither do I mention this merely to obtain an opportunity of expressing my feelings of thankfulness; but to press with affectionate earnestness upon your

memories, how much the energy and excellence of instruction depend upon the qualifications and conduct of those that hear. Little do they, whose listless countenance and wandering eye betray the indifference of a vacant mind—little do they know how much they deaden the future efforts of the minister of God, and how much they diminish the profit they might have derived, through God's blessing, from his words, and how fearfully they endanger the final salvation of their souls. We all know where it is written, that death and judgment are appointed to all; and it is to prepare you to meet that death with pious resignation, and to come unto that judgment with the steady calmness of a reasonable hope, that I have laid these considerations before you. The ordinances of God, whether of prayer or preaching, are ordained for the spiritual edification of the Church; and each member of the Church will be questioned in the last awful day as to the profit he has drawn from these opportunities of good. There the employment of all our years, our days, our hours, nay of this very hour itself, will be scrutinised. It will then be no excuse for our inattention and carelessness, to urge that the instructor was wanting in the powers of reasoning, the energy of diction, or the beauties of imagination. To this only will it be required that we should give an answer, whether he spake the things which be-

long unto salvation in the words of soberness and the accents of solemnity ; and whether we listened in the spirit of reverential seriousness, and engrafted the virtues he recommended into the tenor of our lives. Let us, therefore, so struggle against the infirmities and propensities of our nature, as to consider only what is the profit which we may draw from our hearing. Let us regard the temple of the Lord, not as an intellectual, but as a spiritual school ; not merely as a place where we may strengthen the understanding and increase our knowledge, but as it is in deed and in truth, a place appointed for the improvement of the soul—the seed-time of eternity, and the providential means of enabling us to accomplish the holy end and hope of Christianity—the preparation of the heart to meet its God.

DISCOURSE XIII.

1 COR. chap. xii. latter part of ver. 3.

“No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”

THROUGH ten long Discourses have I been labouring to establish the truth of Christianity upon the foundations of reason. I have taken the subject of religion as I would have taken a subject in philosophy; and, viewing it in all its different bearings, have considered the principles of Christian evidence, and the objections of unbelievers, as if every thing that is valuable in this world and the next, the faith of every Christian,—the very existence of the Gospel itself—depended upon the force of my answers, and the truth or untruth of my own peculiar views. I have spoken as to unbelievers, and reasoned as with unbelievers; and gathering the various weapons of warfare from the writings of the most powerful divines, would trust, that infidelity, when comparing the strength of the argument on both sides, can have no very great cause to triumph

in her superior strength. Such inquiries and occupations as these, are most holy and most useful, when applied to those who believe not, and belong not to the Gospel ; because they may teach them the necessity of distrusting the firmness and beauty of the temple of Reason, when brought into competition with the temple of Christianity. They may also be satisfactory to ourselves, as believers, because they tend to improve our conduct, and increase our faith, by giving us a means of appreciating the security of our trust, and furnishing us with a shield against those arrows of the enemy, which, however severely and frequently defeated, he still continues, whilst flying, to throw back, like the Parthian, against his pursuing conquerors. But never, never should we forget, that the perpetuity of the Gospel depends not, for its defence, upon carnal weapons alone. That the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church, is a promise and a prediction of the Lord which will be fulfilled ; not because the defenders of the Church are able and eloquent, and their reasonings deep and sound—not because it stands in the words of man, but because it is built upon the rock of ages, and standeth in the power and in the wisdom of God.

By reflections like these, I would humble my own understanding, and I would humble

yours. I would quench every feeling of self-confidence. I would bring down the pride of man's heart. I would teach him that the safest reliance is not upon the profound arguments of learning, nor upon the force of philosophical trains of thought, nor upon the efficacy of any thing that he can work out in the nature of evidence for himself, however nobly conceived, or sublimely expressed; but upon the arm of the Almighty. I would say that faith—a faith by which “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and through the mouth confession is made unto salvation”—is the gift of God; and would both learn and teach the wisdom of a meek and entire dependence upon Heaven, by repeating, by enforcing, and by illustrating the unequivocal declaration of the text, when taken in its most literal sense, that, “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”

This, to many, is a hard saying, and has been of difficult reception with Christians of every age; but more especially with those whose habit it has been, to regard religion in an intellectual point of view; and to measure the probability and the merit of every opinion solely by the standard of the common processes of ratiocination in other subjects. To acknowledge that faith is the gift of God, is, according to their philosophising and

logical views, to take away all virtue and praise from belief, and to strip infidelity of all its guilt. For if we cannot admit or say, that Jesus is the Christ; if we cannot teach or cordially acquiesce in the truth and divine authority of the Gospel, and in the claims of Jesus to be the Christ, without being assisted in arriving at that conclusion by the influence and co-operation of the Holy Spirit; then they contend, that, since God giveth the Spirit only to whom he will, and communicates it only in what measure he will, there can be but little fault in our not being possessed of that quality which depends upon the will of another—not immediately, indeed, but yet ultimately upon the will of another—inasmuch as God alone can endue us with the means of coming to a right conclusion in the matter.

But whatever may be the difficulties attending the subject, the absolute necessity of God's assistance, through the Holy Spirit, to inspire us with the faith as well as the feelings of a Christian, is one of the leading doctrines of the Gospel. It is unequivocally and frequently inculcated, not only by the Apostles of Jesus after his death, and the full development of the Christian scheme, but with quite as much plainness and certainty by Jesus himself. It may be questioned perhaps by some, whether the context and phraseology of the words

which I have placed at the head of the present Discourse, though apparently, and in their literal meaning, confirming the doctrine in its fullest extent, are yet sufficiently clear to support the idea without some other corroboration. But there is abundant proof to be deduced from other and independent passages. St. Paul* informs us that spiritual things are spiritually discerned: and that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither indeed can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” He consequently considers faith as one of the fruits of the Spirit.† Our Lord himself is also equally positive in declaring that without him we can do nothing;‡ and that no man can come to him who is not drawn of God;|| that is, to whom the power of coming to him is not given by the Father; for that he only who is of God heareth and receiveth God’s word.§ The doctrine that faith is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and the gift of God, is in reality but a branch of that great and universal principle so distinctly and solemnly laid down by the Apostle,¶ that “we are not able of ourselves to do any thing, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.” The same divine origin is attributed without excep-

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

† Gal. v. 22.

‡ John xv. 5.

|| John vi. 44.

§ John viii. 47.

¶ 1 Cor. iii. 5.

tion to all that we do, and must of course include that most peculiar and efficacious of all Christian graces, a sincere and never-failing Christian faith. With these various passages before us it is almost impossible to suppose, when we take the spirit and expressions of them all into consideration, that we are mistaken in considering the assertion contained in the text to be a legitimate doctrine of the New Testament. In some sense or other, it is quite evident, that “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” I shall therefore proceed upon the presumption that such is the declaration of Scripture, and endeavour to point out, as well as I am able, in what sense the mysterious declaration is made, —to vindicate its propriety and consistency, and to shew that so far from being unreasonable, it is a just, an useful, and a consolatory reflection.

In the first place, then, though the Spirit is frequently said to be necessary, it is never said to be the only thing necessary to the attainment of faith, or any other virtue. Neither are its influences ever represented as irresistible in their operations, or as determining the judgment without the exercise of those ordinary faculties of reason which the Deity has communicated in different proportions, as it seemeth best in his own sight, to every man. The mind must com-

pare what the Spirit suggests ; and human labour and meditation must be added to divine assistance and gifts. The Jews are commanded to search the Scriptures for a testimony to Jesus. The Bereans are commended for fulfilling the precept, and yet the Apostle puts up his prayer to the Almighty that he would lead his converts into a right understanding in all things ; and by the mere act of uttering the prayer, has intimated, that he considered a right understanding in every thing as a gift of Heaven. Paul, he teaches us, is to plant ; Apollos to water ; and God to give the increase—whilst the very nature of the metaphor implies the existence of a soil whose natural energies may be roused into operation by their united labours. The promise of the Spirit, then, was not given with any intention of precluding the use, but of aiding the infirmities and imperfections, of reason. The whole vigour of our intellectual faculties must be devoted to the investigation of the truth of Christianity ; and we must argue, and inquire, and dispute, and work out our own faith, with the same humility and diligence with which we work out our own salvation, and for the same reason, too, because it is God who assists and alone can render us competent to the task.

Again, though it be perfectly true, that God

gives his Holy Spirit only to whom he will, and in what measure he will ; that is, in other words, makes his own will the guide and law of his gifts ; yet such is his ineffable wisdom, and his boundless benevolence to man, that we may feel assured that his own will is the best of all guides in their distribution, and that his mercy will never withhold what is needful for the salvation of any individual, nor refuse to impart it to that extent in which it may be requisite for his attainment of every necessary qualification of a Christian.

These points being once admitted, every objection to the doctrine as infringing upon the liberty of man, or as inconsistent with the principles of impartial justice, must altogether vanish. But the difficulty of illustrating the extent and mode of the Spirit's operation upon our belief still remains to be considered ; and the variety of ways in which the Holy Ghost may contribute to the formation or stability of our faith is what still demands from us an attentive consideration proportioned to the obscurity and importance of the subject.

1. To acquiesce from habit or education, or from any other accidental cause, in the truth of any proposition into whose nature and evidences we have instituted no previous inquiry, is what

the world calls prejudice. The thing to which we have assented may be true or false; but we have no adequate means of judging either of the one or the other. The zeal of the Pharisee in making proselytes to his sect, proved only the bigotry of his own mind. The stubborn perseverance of the Jew in defending his error through evil report and good report, proves only, in the opinion of Christians, that Providence still continues, in fulfilment of prophecy, to spread the veil of ignorance over his heart; but in neither case can it convince us that the sentiments they maintain are built upon a solid foundation; nor can it in either case afford any security to themselves that they will remain unchanged in their present views. Inquiry or circumstances may destroy their prejudice in favour of their early creed. The faith of a Christian, in like manner, if it aspire to any thing more than the character of a prejudice, should rest upon some rational ground, which cannot be acquired without a knowledge of some portion, at least, of the various arguments for the truth of the Christian revelation, and without some general idea of the consistency of the precepts and doctrines of the Gospel, with the dictates of reason and the attributes of the Deity. And this knowledge can never be attained without a solemn, serious, and impartial investigation.

Occupied, however, with the cares of the world, unnerved by indolence, desirous of ease, and engrossed by visible objects; endued with passions which find their full gratification only in perishable and earthly things, and formed only to expatiate over the regions of nature and of sense, man is almost universally indisposed to pay any great attention to spiritual subjects. He is unwilling to diminish the comforts of the body solely with the view of enlarging the powers of the mind. He is unwilling to increase his sorrow for the simple purpose of increasing his religious knowledge. It is only in the ministers of religion, and, so strongly is the love of ease attached to human nature, that it is not so often as could be wished, even amongst them, that there is to be found a ready and a constant inclination to search into the evidences and exhaust the treasures of divine truth. Interest and reputation are too frequently the motives of our energy, when we do enter upon these sacred studies, and when this stimulus is once withdrawn, when we have reached the height of our ambition, or been checked by the recurrence of unmerited and unexpected disappointments, we too frequently perceive our serious pursuits as the servants of God, fading away into the easier occupations of the literary or domestic character. Now it is the province of the Spirit

to co-operate with us in curing these defects, to overcome this universal love of ease, to subdue this indisposition to spiritual subjects, to quench or correct this impatience of interruption in our more congenial pursuits, and to give us the will to make, and diligence to persevere in that steady and conscientious inquiry into the revelation of God, without which we can hope to establish no rational or solid belief either in ourselves or others.

2. But the Spirit, even where the will happens to be present, is, in many instances, necessary to give us the power of instituting such an inquiry into the evidences of revealed or natural religion as may be sufficient to place the security of our faith beyond the reach of danger. Those who, by accident or circumstances, have been deprived of the advantages of a liberal education; whose line of life has thrown them out of the habit of scientific investigation; whose reasoning faculty has been choaked by the weeds of prejudice, or degenerated into barrenness from neglect; or, lastly, to whom it has pleased God in his wisdom to grant but a small proportion of intellectual talent—such persons, if left to the agency of their own unassisted endeavours, must ever want either the power or the opportunity of establishing in themselves a faith which may resist the

temptations of the world and the ingenuities of sophistry. For though the broad and leading and general arguments in favour of the Gospel are so plain in their nature, as to be easily comprehended by the weakest capacities, and so forcible in their effects as to be convincing to the most learned, and irresistible to all, when fairly considered; yet the wickedness and perverted reasonings of the enemies of Christianity have contrived to raise so many and such plausible objections; to array them in such strength, and clothe them with such elegance, that those who have not been taught in the sophistry of man's wisdom, and who are not competently acquainted with the history of past ages, and deeply imbued in many of the various and abstruser species of human learning, cannot possibly detect the trivial and fallacious nature of the arguments advanced by infidels—cannot possibly frame for themselves a satisfactory answer to all their cavils.

Except the Spirit of God, therefore, came to aid the weakness of the ignorant and confirm their belief, by enlightening their understanding and establishing the conclusions they had already drawn—that belief would stand upon a very slippery and uncertain foundation. The poor and uneducated, without the assistance derived from the Deity through the influence of the Holy

Spirit, would, in their profession of Christianity, be fleeting as a shadow, and unstable as water. The goodly fabric of their hope in Jesus, if raised only upon the treacherous sand of human reason, would be liable to be destroyed by every storm; to be blown about by every wind of doctrine, and then, finally, overwhelmed in the torrent of infidelity.—Next to God and to his Christ, and his Spirit, Satan is universally represented to us in Scripture as the most powerful of spiritual beings,—an enemy as much superior to the human race in wisdom, as he is inferior to the Deity himself. And, consequently, if we would effectually resist the artifices of this active and intelligent being, who is ever on the wing seeking whom he may devour—never wearied in the ways of deceit, and departing from us only to renew the attack with tenfold vigour, we must not trust wholly to our own weakness, but to the co-operation of him who is the source and fountain of all strength.—We must be bold and confident only in the Lord.

But, 3rdly, Where men from nature, habit, or education, have been blessed with good desires, and gifted by God with the power of bringing their desires to good effect—where men possess the faculty of fulfilling their inclinations, by making a serious inquiry into the evidences of

revelation, and thus establishing their faith upon the rock of reason—even here, too, no man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost. The result of the inquiry still depends upon the Holy Spirit working in and with the understanding.—It is true, indeed, that it is the province of reason to give a decision upon the force of the various arguments advanced in defence of, or in opposition to, any fact or any proposition. It is equally true, also, that reason when left to herself, when seeing clearly and fully, and impartially, will, in every instance, decide rightly. When unbiassed in her judgment, her judgments will always be true. But does reason in the present state of the world, and the miserable corruption of man, ever see clearly, fully, or impartially? Is she ever, in fact, left to herself, or unbiassed in the judgment she pronounces? Before the fall of our first parents, she might be so. Whilst the image of God remained unsullied and unsubdued, in the mind; whilst the heart of man was right with God, his understanding might speak the language of truth; but it certainly cannot now be said to be in that happy situation.—“The heart of man (it is the unerring word and not the fallible minister of God, who is making the declaration) is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” And this deceitfulness and wickedness of the heart

must necessarily influence the decisions of the head. We see also but in part, says St. Paul, therefore, not fully. We see as through a glass darkly; therefore, not clearly. We are subject also to a variety of passions, every one of which is strictly forbidden in the Gospel; and we are therefore interested in denying the truth of the Gospel, so long as we have the slightest desire of indulging those passions.—For he that hath in him any principle contrary to the Christian doctrines and precepts, cannot possibly by his own unassisted powers attain unto the sincere profession of the Christian faith.—He must overcome and resign the principle, before he can expect to believe; because that principle, by making him prejudiced in his judgment of the proofs of revelation, will necessarily destroy his impartiality, and, through that, his capability of drawing just conclusions. The terrors of conscience spring from the dread of future punishment. The Gospel denounces that punishment against every kind and degree of iniquity. It permits not a virtue to be omitted, or a sin to be practised with impunity.—It requires us to love God above every thing, and our neighbour as ourselves. It declares, that neither fornicators, nor unjust, nor covetous, nor idolaters can by any means enter the kingdom of Heaven.—Whoever, therefore, is destitute of piety or of charity—

whoever is under the influence of any evil inclination, will be disposed to admit a corrupt or imperfect religion upon the slightest proofs; to reject a just and holy one, though confirmed by the strongest which are possible. His passions and his prejudices will give new force to the objections against the latter, and an undue weight to the arguments in favour of the former. And this is the reason why Mahometanism and Idolatry, contrary as they are to reason and the purity of God, have enjoyed such extensive prevalence for so many ages, and received such implicit and universal belief amongst so many nations.—The corruption of human nature pleads powerfully in their behalf, indisposes their disciples to inquire impartially into their merits, and leaves them without a wish to entertain a single doubt as to the divinity of their origin. It is the same reason also, which has armed so many enemies against the cause of Christianity, because it opposes the evil of our ways, and thus makes it the interest of every ungodly mind to bring down her honours to the dust. In a word, “the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit.”* “The carnal mind is enmity against God;”† and consequently the carnal mind cannot readily receive the purity of those things which are revealed by the Spirit of God.

* Gal. v. 17.

† Rom. viii. 7.

Since the passions, then, are the leading obstacles to the reception of Christianity, whatever subdues or diminishes those passions will tend in the same degree to promote our faith.

That faculty, however, and that only, which will enable us to correct and purify the heart, is the Spirit of God.—“I bring my body under subjection,” says St. Paul;* and then, lest we should foolishly misinterpret his meaning, or conceive that he gloried in his own strength, he immediately adds, “yet not I, but the Spirit of God which is in me.”

The Spirit of God, therefore, is the Author of faith, either by disposing our minds to inquire into the truth, or by enduing us with the power of deciding with impartiality upon the evidences of revelation, or by teaching us most sincerely to obey, or to intend at least to obey, the will, that we may the more readily receive the word of God. If we use with fidelity the natural powers with which we are endowed, and close not the eye and the ear of the understanding against the divine influence of the Comforter, we have the promise of God as strongly to assure us that, whatever be our station in life, or however weak our reason, or imperfect our education, we shall be preserved

* 1 Cor. ix. 27.

from the snares of the beguiling sceptic, and attain to the blessedness of a solid faith, as we have to convince us that, if we be sincere in our endeavours, and pure in our intention of obeying the precepts of righteousness, we shall be saved from the temptations of a sinful world and conducted into the way of everlasting holiness. The effects of a lively faith and the virtues of a Christian life, will alike be wrought and continued in those who look up to God for help, and despise not or resist not the workings of his grace.

Just and true then, are all thy sayings, O Lord God Almighty ! And though really repugnant to the pride, and apparently inconsistent with the reasonings of man, yet true and just also it is, that no man can acknowledge Jesus to be the Christ, or preserve the possession of his faith without fear, unless guided and protected by the superintending and abiding influence of the Holy Ghost. I should be sorry, however, to quit the subject here. That pearl of great price to be sought for in every doctrine revealed to us in Holy Scripture, is to be found in the moral and practical consequences which flow from it ; and if it be necessary to prove the assertion of the text to be correct, it is still more necessary to shew that it has a direct and immediate tendency to the happiness and virtue of mankind.

“Work out your own salvation,” says the Apostle, “with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you;” because though your weakness is made strength through the favour of God, yet that favour may be lost by negligence and presumption, and it therefore demands your utmost diligence to make your calling and election sure. But if such the arduous labour we are called to, such the uncertainty of our hope, even with the assistance afforded and the confidence inspired by the promise and possession of the Spirit, how miserable would be the state of man were that guidance and protection withdrawn. It would then be impossible to work out our salvation at all. Many even of those to whom I am now speaking, and perhaps the greater part of every other Christian congregation, are deprived by circumstances of the learning and leisure requisite for the scientific consideration of the more abstruse and difficult branches of Christian evidence, even granting that the consideration would always terminate in a successful issue, and that they had no prejudices to warp or disturb their conclusions. But our sufficiency in this, as in all other things, is of God, and faith is one of the fruits of the Spirit. The most erudite and laborious cannot grasp this “substance of things hoped for, this evidence of things not seen,” by their own ordinary and unassisted reason. If left

to themselves they must indeed fear and tremble in the most appalling sense of the words, with the fear and trembling of horror and despair, arising from the consciousness of the misguiding influence and subtlety of their passions and prejudices. For the natural man, when left alone, is left naked and defenceless to the enemy within and to the enemy without, to the recklessness of his own depraved affections and the insinuations and artifices of evil men. Whilst, on the other hand, with the comfortable assurance we now enjoy of God's assistance, we are only subject to the fear and trembling of a cautious vigilance. And whoever is diligent to make the best use of the natural and supernatural powers intrusted to him by his Maker, the Almighty still speaks to him in the language in which he once consoled the Apostle of the Gentiles, "My grace is sufficient for thee."* Though without the Spirit of God we cannot reach unto an effectual and saving faith, yet, if we resist or refuse not the proffered aid, God is both able and willing to keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

Truth and consolation, then, are both combined in the doctrine, that faith is the gift of God. But it possesses, lastly, another advantage. It is

* 2 Cor. xii. 9.

a doctrine admirably calculated to promote the end of all revelation, the cause of piety and morality. This will be evident if we consider that the only two conditions which God has appointed to us as the means of calling down the co-operating influence of his grace, are sincerity of intention and fervency of prayer. "If any man will do the will of my Father," says our Saviour,* "he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Consequently, since to know of the doctrine whether it be of God, is one of the gifts of the Spirit, it is the same as if he had said, "If any man be willing to do the will of my Father, he shall also be assisted by the Spirit of my Father." Some natural powers of acting and of thinking, perhaps of acting and thinking rightly too, are given to all, and though not sufficient for all the purposes of redemption, yet if we diligently exert the faculties we possess, our exertions will be crowned with more abundance. That faith is the gift of God, is, therefore, a strong inducement to intentions and endeavours after innocence and holiness of conduct, since it is first of all necessary that we strive to arm ourselves with the breast-plate of righteousness, before we can hope to be armed by God with the sword of the Spirit and the helmet of salvation.

* John vii. 17.

But that branch of the whole duty of man, to the practice of which this doctrine, of the necessity of the co-operation of the Spirit to the attainment of faith, most forcibly persuades, is a fervency and frequency of prayer. “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Spirit to them that ask him,” saith the Lord. The necessary things of the present life, the provisions and garments of man, the light of the glorious sun, and the powers of understanding and thought, God sheds indifferently upon the evil and the good. He feeds the lion and the lamb, and sends down his bounty on the just and the unjust. But to those only who ask, will spiritual blessings be communicated. To those only who knock, and who knock in the accepted time, will the Spirit open the everlasting gates of the Gospel. We are called upon, therefore, we are above all things called upon, to be fervent and importunate with God in our supplications for this heavenly gift. Our prayers cannot be too fervent, cannot be too importunate. For there are limits even to God’s mercy. He will assuredly forsake us whenever he shall see that we have finally forsaken him; and whenever he may think fit to leave us to our own weakness and wickedness, we shall become the slaves of passion and the enemies of all true reason, and the

despisers of the Gospel; outcasts from Heaven's mercy, and lost, utterly and deservedly lost, for ever; knowing, as we do, that we had the power of saving ourselves through the aid of the Spirit of God; and knowing also that the prayers we have neglected, were the only effectual and appointed means for calling down his spiritual blessings on our heads.

DISCOURSE XIV.

PHILIP. chap. ii. ver. 12, 13.

“ Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

THE grain which is scattered upon the face of the earth striketh root downwards, and being watered by the genial showers of Spring, doth bring forth, first the blade, and then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear, and man doth eat thereof, and is satisfied. The word of God is the seed of grace, and being sown in an honest and a good heart, and watered by the continual dew of God's blessing, doth bring forth, first, the knowledge of the truth, and then upon that stem the flowers of holiness, and then the fruits of holiness unto everlasting life. From the great storehouse of this spiritual seed—from the Holy Scriptures, which are full of the revelations of the Almighty God, I have this day selected a seed of most

precious value—a seed at once of doctrine, of reproof, of correction, and of instruction in righteousness; and I humbly pray, that though it be sown by the weakness of a man, it may be quickened by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth fruit an hundred-fold unto your eternal glory.

“Work out your own salvation,” says the Apostle, “with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”—Three circumstances are here pointed out to our consideration, and impressed upon our minds with an affectionate earnestness: First, the thing to be done; secondly, the manner of doing it; and thirdly, the reason of both. “Work out your own salvation.”—That is the thing to be done. Work it out “with fear and trembling.”—That is the manner of doing it. And the reason of both is founded upon the merciful assistance of Heaven.—“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

“Work out your own *salvation*.” It is of no common salvation that the Apostle thus speaks. It is not of any deliverance from human suffering, wrought out for us by the power of any human arm; but of that deliverance which cometh of

God alone, the deliverance of man in all his parts and powers; the salvation both of his body and his soul; the salvation of body and soul from death and from hell; from the anguish of the second death, from the torments of the devil and his angels; from the sufferings of wicked spirits and of wicked men, condemned for their sin to everlasting misery. Salvation when thus interpreted is a word of mighty import indeed; but even thus interpreted we have not exhausted the whole of the blessings it conveys. They that are made partakers of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, are made also partakers of eternal glory, and, together with a deliverance from the horrible wretchedness of the damned, shall obtain also a reward in the pleasures and society of the righteous. For, according to the doctrine of the Apostle, it is a faithful saying, that they who through Christ are dead to the power and punishment of sin, shall live with him in holiness, and reign with him in happiness, according to the number and nature of their works.

This then is the salvation of the text, and when we consider its extreme value and unspeakable importance, we need no longer wonder at the earnestness with which we are exhorted to "*work it out*;" to labour early and late; daily and duly all the days of our life; to give all heed

and diligence to make our calling effectual, and our hope secure. It is a fearful thing to endure pain in body, or anguish in mind, even though it be but for a passing hour; and redemption from the wretchedness of even this mortal state, would be purchased by the sufferer with the sacrifice of all the glory that wealth or dominion could bring. But it is a far more fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; a far more joyful thing to be redeemed from his wrath. It is a peace that passeth all understanding, which he experiences who is delivered from the fear of a state of woe without comfort, because without end. Who could dwell, or even think of dwelling, with everlasting burnings, and not desire, and seek, and struggle for redemption?

But *how* is this salvation to be wrought out? What must I do to be thus saved? This is the language of nature and sincerity. It is a question the first and the greatest which can occur to the mind of any godly man. I shall proceed to answer it by inquiring, who they are that will obtain, and who that will fall short of the salvation of Jesus?

Sin, and sorrow, and death:—these things are often joined together in the language of man, and never will be separated from each other in

the judgments of God. Because of sin came sorrow and death: because of sin the gates of hell were opened, and sinners and they that forget God are those who shall be turned into hell, and be closed for ever in the darkness of its gloom. But are we not all sinners? I tremble whilst I confess that we are. And will not hell then be our portion for ever? I rejoice with trembling, whilst I declare through God and my Saviour, that it may not. "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation unto all men." The Gospel has been revealed, and offered the redemption of souls, and given the gift of eternal life to every faithful man, who denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, shall live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. These are the conditions upon which we shall be redeemed from punishment; and in working out our salvation, our labour and our care must be directed to fulfil them. We must study to banish from our thoughts every evil imagination, and from our conduct every evil deed. We must learn to walk honestly in the sight of God, and of man; we must be charitable and kind, and useful and just to our neighbours, and submissive and pious before God. We must have faith first of all, and then to our faith add virtue, and temperance, and chastity, and sobriety, and brotherly love, and compassion. If in any of these things we should

fail, or if at any time we should fall from the practice of our duty, we must again work out our salvation, by renewing ourselves again unto repentance, and bringing forth again the graces of a holy life, which are the only natural fruits, the only solid proof of a repentance which is indeed sincere.

But how shall we be *able* to do this great thing? Work as much as he will, how shall a corrupted man, with a corrupted mind, and in a corrupted world, be enabled to work out his salvation by a steady and persevering course of righteousness; or how, after having long been accustomed to do evil, shall he break through the sinful habits of a sinful nature, and change at once the colour of his life, and wash away the spots of his iniquity? My brethren, with man these things are impossible. But the Apostle builds upon a better foundation than the weakness of mortality? He tells us that “it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do”—and with God all things are possible, and through him we are able to do all things. Moses stretched forth his hand, and the waters were divided, and became a wall unto the children of Israel, on the right hand and on the left. Moses smote the rock with his rod, and the waters flowed withal, and the children of Israel were refreshed in the

wilderness, and were saved from death. But what was there in the arm of Moses, that the sea should obey it and stand still? Or what in the rod of Moses, that it should turn the flinty rock into a living fountain? Let me freely, though reverently, speak to you of the patriarch Moses. He was indeed great, because he was indeed good, in his generation. But except in the matter of his goodness—except in his superior faith and trust in his Maker—except in his more ready obedience to the holy desires which the spirit of the Lord inspired into his soul, he was no more than the rest of the Israelites, and the rest of men. Like them, like us, like every human being that is born of woman, he was compassed with infirmities, and tried with afflictions, and subject to terror, and surrounded with sorrow. Of himself he was able to do nothing, but all the mighty acts which he did, he did because “it was God which worked in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure,” and because Moses did not resist the will of God, or neglect or abuse the power with which he was endued. If to the Jew God was very liberal, we have the promise of his beloved Son, that to Christians in all spiritual and necessary things, he will be still more so. Over the world without us, he will perhaps give us no power—because we are not called upon to save a people. But we *are* called upon to save

ourselves, and he *will* give us a power over the rebellious world that is within us. Stretch forth but your hands in faith and sincerity to God, and surely he will separate between you and your lusts. He will divide the tumultuous sea of your passions, and open for you a way to escape from your enemies into the land of eternity. He will cause the waves thereof to stand still and harmless on your right hand and on your left, and make you to walk in safety and unhurt through the overflowings of ungodliness, which, without his controlling arm, would have drowned your souls in perdition and destruction. Be ye never so faint and weary in the wilderness of sin, yet if in humility you smite upon your breast, and say, God be merciful to me a sinner! he will melt the stony heart within you, and turning it into a fountain of piety and love—of love to man and love to your Maker, refresh you with the living waters of the comfort of the Spirit, and strengthen you by its power for your pilgrimage through life. All these things will the Lord our God do for those who yield to the godly motions which he inspires, and presume not to despise his inward workings. For God will not always work in us effectually, and never does he work in us irresistibly to will and to do the things which we will not to do. We are taught by his holy Apostle, St. Paul, that we may resist the influence, that we may quench the

power of God's working, and if we dare to do the deed, assuredly and in justice his grace and aid will be withdrawn from us for ever. The Spirit would not always strive with man in the days of Noah, neither will it do more in these latter days. Often grieved, and often slighted, he may often return in mercy, and in kindness renew in our hearts the will and the power to work out our salvation. But the day and hour are fixed—fixed in the counsels of the everlasting God, the day and hour beyond which his grace will be irrecoverable, and our misery unavoidable.

Work out therefore your salvation “*with fear and trembling*”—not with that dreary fear which is the grave of all holy hope—not with that unreasonable trembling which is destructive of the spirit of energy and cheerfulness; but with a godly fear, and a salutary trembling—with a fear lest you should fall, with a trembling lest you should fail—with a fear lest you should forfeit, with a trembling lest you should come short of salvation—with a fear lest any part of your duty should be neglected—with trembling lest any part of it should be forgotten—with fear lest you be overcome by temptation—with trembling lest you should be deserted by God, in whom alone we are powerful to do good, and to obtain everlasting life. Work out your salvation with a fearful

feeling of your natural weakness, and a trembling consciousness of your natural unworthiness. For what thing, even in this transitory world, does a man desire to gain, and not fear to lose? The love of what being, the possession of what blessing? And what is there that is uncertain in this world, and man does not tremble for the uncertainty? So should it be in the great work of our salvation. Salvation may not be ours, and we should fear to lose, and labour not to lose it. Salvation depends upon the future as well as the present tenour of our lives and thoughts, and the future is always uncertain, and so we should tremble for the uncertainty, and strive the more zealously to make it sure. We should fear, because we have a work to do which, being left alone, we were unable to perform. We should tremble, because though God empowers us to fulfil the task, he works neither so irresistibly nor so certainly upon our hearts as finally to prevent our falling from grace, or to preclude the possibility of our failing of Salvation.

Such is the nature of that fear and trembling which the Apostle recommends; not that fear which is slavish and terrible, but a fear which is the very reverse of confidence, and whose end is caution; not the trembling of agony and despair, but a trembling which is opposed to carelessness,

and whose effect is diligence ; diligence to make our calling and election sure.

Yet, even this salutary fear and trembling should not be carried beyond proper bounds, nor permitted to rise so high in degree as either to deject the spirit, deaden the energies, or destroy the understanding of man. We ought, we must always keep our own weakness and unworthiness in our view, but then we should not think of our own weakness and unworthiness alone. We should mingle with this melancholy reflection upon ourselves, the consolatory remembrance of the power and the mercy of God, his will and his ability to help and to defend us in all our dangers. It is the just God that worketh in us, and we should fear and tremble lest his justice be offended, and his aid withdrawn. But it is also the God of tender mercy that worketh in us, and we should neither fear nor tremble beyond measure. He may desert us ; and we should be careful. But he will not willingly desert us, and we need not be anxious without cause. We should fear, but not be fearful ; we should tremble, but not be cast down.

Work out your salvation, therefore, with industry unwearied and unbending, because, of all the things you can desire, it is the most important.

Work it out with fear and trembling, because, of all the things you have to do, it is the most difficult, and to be attained only through the divine assistance; “for it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do *of his good pleasure.*”

In these latter words many wavering and distrustful minds have found a cause of sorrowing; and stumbling at the stumbling-block of predestination, have gone on in their way in despondency, and ended their pilgrimage in despair. They have thought, that if God worketh in us of his good pleasure alone, we have no certain assurance that he has, or does, or will work in us at all—that it is only in the elect that his operations are made effectual to good, and that in all the rest of the world, they are but the more certain means of increasing their damnation, of giving them over more surely to a reprobate mind, a lost estate, and unavoidable and everlasting misery. Truth and holiness forbid that we should ever be betrayed into such unrighteous views of thy dispensations, O most merciful Lord! Here, at least, in the passage before us, they have not, I think, the shadow of a foundation. To my imagination, these few and simple words—“*of his good pleasure,*” have communicated, in moments of spiritual sadness, a consolation greater than I am able to express. For consider upon whose good pleasure

it is, that I am taught to rely. It is upon that of the Almighty and most Merciful God, in whom the fulness of power, and of wisdom dwells, and with whom there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning. To whose good pleasure could I more safely trust the issue of my happiness or misery than that of a Being like this? On whose will could I more securely rest for the means of working out the salvation of my soul, than that of the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Reflect but for a moment what God is, and what he has done for us. He is our Creator and Redeemer—our Creator in holiness and happiness, our Redeemer from misery and guilt—and he has done that for us which we would not have done for each other, and could not have done for ourselves. He has sent his beloved and his only-begotten Son into the world, to take our miserable nature upon him—to be despised and rejected, and slain—to suffer death upon the cross—to shed his blood for the remission of our sins, and thus to become, if possible, the Saviour of all mankind. All these things hath the Lord done for man. And is he still to be regarded as a respecter of persons, a character which by the mouth of his prophets he has expressly denied? After all that he has done to prove the kindness and the impartiality of his nature, is his good pleasure presumptuously to be doubted and

feared? If it were a man, or even an angel, of whose good pleasure the Apostle spoke, we might distrust the justice of his judgment, and fear lest his ways should be unequal, and his dealings according to favour. But it is God that worketh in us—God who is the maker of all and whose mercy is alike over all his works—a God of whom we are expressly taught by the Apostles of Jesus, that it is his will that *all*—all without exception, should come to faith and repentance, and everlasting life—that *all* should come to the knowledge, and the practice, and the enjoyment of holiness. Surely the pleasure of such a Being must be good; surely it must be the good pleasure of such a Being to give to every one the means of attaining what it is his desire that they should attain. Surely it must be the good pleasure of such a Being to work in every man, at some period of his life, both to will and to do the things which are necessary for the working out of his salvation. But with regard to ourselves, at least, my brethren, there can be no reasonable cause of doubt. Unto every one of us at least there has been given grace both to will and to do. God hath called us often and openly into his vineyard, and if we still stand idle, the fault and the guilt are in ourselves. Every soul amongst us has been called this day by the language of the Apostle, and taught, in the words of the text, the

way, the truth, and the life. Listen, therefore, obediently and seriously to the call, and diligently work out *your own* salvation—for no other way will be effectual to good. If you will not work for yourselves, God will not work in you—and man cannot work for you. We may pray for your conversion—we may preach for your instruction—friends may exhort, and rebuke, and reprove, and implore—the Spirit may strive and struggle, and resist, and restrain—but all is in vain if you either neglect his warning, or abuse his goodness. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed—even so now much more, after having heard the doctrine of the Apostle, and been instructed in its meaning, and learnt its power; labour to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for yourselves. For there is no other way given under heaven to man whereby he may be saved, but only in the diligent use of the means which have been put into his power. That we are able to work out our salvation at all, it is indeed only because God worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure: but then whilst we humble the pride of righteousness by this reflection on our weakness, let us at the same time console our minds, and strengthen our hearts, by remembering that God will never leave nor forsake us, if we be diligent to make our calling and election sure. Therefore once

more and again let me intreat you, to "*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; because it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*"

You may, perhaps, some of you, my brethren, be inclined to regard the anxious and repeated earnestness with which these holy and awful truths have been impressed upon your thoughts, as unsuitable to the spiritual state of persons, who, like yourselves, are in the habit of duly attending upon the ordinances of religion, of receiving the sacramental elements of offering up prayers to the throne of grace, and devoutly studying the word of God. You may think them fitted only for babes in Christ, and such as have been imbued with no more than the mere rudiments of faith. Should an imagination so vain have sprung up in your minds, correct it, ere it become strong and dangerous, by considering to whom the words of the text were originally spoken. It was to the Philippians that the Apostle gave this serious and awful warning. It was to the Philippians who had sympathised with him in his bonds, communicated to his wants, ministered to him in his afflictions, obeyed his commandments, loved Christ, and loved each other, that St. Paul addressed this earnest and solemn exhortation. It were in vain for any to

think that they are beyond these Philippians these beloved disciples of this great Teacher of Christianity, either in knowledge, or in purity, or in safety. It were in vain for any to flatter themselves with the hope of being placed above the reach of spiritual danger, however deep in holy wisdom, however full of holy faith, however perfect in holy practice, or however void of offence towards God and towards man. None but the saints in light ; none but the redeemed, the sanctified, or the glorified ; none but the angels in heaven, or the spirits of just men made perfect ; none but those whom death hath freed from the bondage of sin and corruption, can say that they are free from the obligation of listening to the commandment and warning of the text. Upon all on this side the grave, it is the bounden duty of God's ministers to impress the great necessity of doing the work of salvation, and of doing it diligently and sincerely, tremblingly alive to the consciousness of their own infirmity, fearfully aware of the dreadfulness of a fall, and humbly relying upon the strength of that Almighty arm which alone can make our feeble efforts effectual to accomplish the work.

DISCOURSE XV.

ISAIAH, *chap. i. ver. 16.*

“Cease to do evil, learn to do well.”

I NEVER yet sat down to peruse the Word of God, whether from duty or from inclination, without rising from the performance of the task both instructed and pleased; pleased with its varied excellence and unnumbered beauties, and instructed by those important and general rules of life, those useful *compendia* of the whole duty of man, which are at once the shortest, the most intelligible, and the most comprehensive which were ever given to direct the ways of wanderers. Precepts there are in the Scriptures, such as revealed wisdom only could have taught, yet such as the natural understanding immediately approves. In short, let any man open his Bible with sincerity and devotion; let him read it with impartiality and attention, and I doubt not but he will close it, with a full conviction of its superior excellence, and enriched in his mind with some universal

rule of religious wisdom, which, without burthening his memory, he may carry in his bosom into the haunts of the world, and apply without difficulty to the business of life.

Upon one of these rules it is my present intention to discourse. “Cease to do evil, learn to do well,” says the prophet, in the name of the Lord, to the children of Israel his people. The exhortation stands amidst a variety of others; but it is so plain that it requires no explanation, and so general in reference, that it may be applied, with equal force and justice, to every age and generation upon earth. Our labour, therefore, will be confined to the mere object of enlarging upon its simplicity, and pointing out its importance. It consists, then, it is evident, of two distinct precepts; the first of which enjoins an abstinence from what is evil, the second a pursuit of what is good; and this is the general language both of reason and revelation, when speaking of what is required to make the moral creature acceptable in the sight of his Creator. Flee from sin and follow virtue. Who does not acknowledge in that sentence the common voice of conscience and of natural religion? “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously,

and godly in this present world.”* Who does not remember in these words, the similar, but more awful declarations of the minister and the Gospel of Jesus Christ? “To cease to do evil, and learn to do well”—that these are things which God and duty demand at the hands of every one, will therefore admit of no dispute, and stands not in need of any further proof. But the propriety of these duties is not the only thing which may be gathered from the words of the text. By the nearness and order in which the two commandments there follow each other, are marked the intimate and inseparable union and connexion which the mind of the prophet considered as subsisting between them; and we are thus led to examine further into the necessity of ceasing to do evil in order that we may learn to do well; the influence which ceasing to do evil has in the preparation and encouragement of the mind to do well; and the absolute and unalterable necessity of both, in order to secure the end of hope, the salvation of our souls.

“Cease to do evil.” This is the first and great commandment of Religion to her children, of the Almighty to those who are the seekers of a blessed immortality. It might seem almost needless to insist upon a principle of duty at once

* Titus ii. 12.

so evident and true, were it not that half the world are in the habit of deceiving themselves both as to what evil is, and what it is to cease to do evil. Evil in the opinion of most men is that only, or at least principally that, which either the law punishes or the world condemns. All beyond this is considered as faulty, indeed, but not truly evil, as wrong, perhaps, but scarcely worthy of the name of sin ; and so if what they do be hidden from the knowledge of man, or if they do nothing which may call forth the voice of public censure or the pain of public punishment, they verily think with themselves that they are not guilty as concerning this thing. But in the all-seeing eye of Him who never slumbereth, who is ever about our path and about our bed, and knoweth at all times both what we do and what we would do ; to Him, whose will is written in his works in all the nations and languages under Heaven ; with that Being who is finally to reward and judge, every thing which revelation as well as reason, every thing which the Gospel as well as the Law hath forbidden, will be regarded and counted to us for evil. When the Christian therefore is taught to cease to do evil, he is warned not only to flee from what the word of man hath made so, but he is told that every lust of the heart, every foolish and sinful habit of thought, of word, or of action, every thing which

is called or made evil by God's word, is to be utterly relinquished, if it has ever been indulged, and to be altogether avoided, if happily, through the grace of God, he may have hitherto been free from its guilt. This the law of Christ requires universally, and in all kinds and degrees of sinfulness: because were the law not universal, were each man to choose that vice which he would practise himself, all vices would in turn be allowed and practised by all, and the righteousness of the Law be made of none effect through our transgressions.

But besides the entire renunciation of the whole body of sin, the commandment of "ceasing to do evil" calls upon us as individuals more especially to avoid that sin which doth most easily beset us. Some sins there always are which do more easily beset and mislead us than others. The situation, profession, and constitution of every man have temptations peculiarly their own. To the rich and great are opened the sources of luxury and pride. To the powerful are given the means of oppression; whilst to the lowly in life the snares of dishonesty are thickly sown amongst the stings of poverty. In constitution, the cheerful are led by the excess of spirits to the follies of dissipation; the melancholy by their want, to distrust or despair. In professions, the

man of commerce is ever exposed to the dangers of covetousness, and his integrity tried by the opportunities of fraud. The knowledge of the law gives to him who practises and understands the law, the certain ability of over-reaching and despoiling his neighbour, without the fear of detection or punishment; whilst they who study the diseases of the human frame, are drawn away by the beauty of the pursuit, to regard the works, rather than the words of God, and in the constant contemplation of the wonders of nature, to neglect or despise the glories of revelation. Nay, even to those that are the teachers and instructors of others in the ways and works of righteousness, there are appropriate and especial dangers. The constant habit of ministering about holy things, is liable to degenerate, at last, into languor or indifference; and instead of a privilege and a delight, to turn religion into a mere matter of daily custom and ordinary business. Thus is there some sort of transgression attached to every state, against which we must industriously guard, and from which it is our own duty more especially to flee. For it is a little thing that ye cease to commit that guilt to which ye are but weakly tempted. The poor man deserves but little praise, because he is not luxurious and proud; nor does the rich deserve more because he is commonly honest in his concerns with man; and if *we* would shew a

sincerity of obedience to the precept of “ceasing to do evil,” we must above all things shew it by struggling against those temptations to sin, to which, by the will of Providence we have been more openly exposed.

The second commandment of the prophet in the text is, that we “learn to do well;” and it is like unto the former, and like it, calculated to promote the great end and aim of our being, the present and eternal welfare of all mankind. The will and wish of heaven is the happiness of its creatures both here and hereafter. In ceasing to do evil, we do nothing more than barely abstain from those actions which would inflict positive misery upon our fellow-creatures in this world, and bring down everlasting wretchedness upon our own souls in the next. But if it be our desire as it ought to be, to imitate the boundless goodness of our Maker—to co-operate with him to the utmost of our power in his merciful purpose of giving the greatest possible happiness to all created beings, in every state and stage of our existence—if, I say, we wish to unite our poor energies to the Almighty power for the accomplishment of this holy work, it is our duty not only to avoid what might injure, but to study also to add to the real, though but temporary, happiness of others in the life that now is, and thus

to secure our own real and eternal happiness in the life that is to come. The only way of effecting these noble and necessary ends is, by being careful to learn to do well; for to do well, in a religious sense, means nothing else than to obey the known will of God—to fulfil, as far as we can, the eternal purpose of his providence, the present and future welfare of all mankind.—To guide us in this heavenly path, little more is required than those instinctive reflexions which are excited in every man's breast by the feeling of his own wants and sufferings, aided by those general directions which are so frequently enforced upon us in the holy Scriptures, of doing good to all, to the utmost of our power; of seeking peace, following charity, and doing to others as we would they should do unto us. If with these considerations upon our minds, we seriously examine the faculties with which we are endowed, and the opportunities of doing well which Providence may have thrown in our way, and labour sincerely to improve them both, no other instruction will be necessary to teach us this second and more conspicuous, though not more indispensable part of our duty as Christians. One only observation I will add upon the subject, and it is this; that as the lot of every man exposes him to a variety of difficulties and temptations in ceasing to do evil, so the merciful goodness of

God has, in remembrance of our frailty, tempered the misfortune, and given to each man some peculiar means and facilities of doing well, and as it is the first business of us all to struggle against those besetting propensities to sin, so it is our especial duty to make the best, the earliest, and the most persevering use of these direct invitations to virtue. In learning to do well, therefore, we must, in the first place, give all heed and diligence to exert and exercise ourselves the most, where most we have the power of being charitable and useful—to take advantage of every season, and talent, and opportunity, which the accidental gifts of nature, or of fortune, may have placed within our reach.

2. I now pass on to the second part of my subject, to point out the influence which ceasing to do evil has in the preparation and encouragement of the mind to do well.

Whilst the heart remains wilfully subject to a train of sinful thoughts, or perseveres in the wilful indulgence of a course of sinful actions, it must necessarily be averse to the performance of every thing which is really and religiously good. Those splendid deeds of ostentatious charity which the world applauds, those open, generous virtues, which entail upon us a good name, and

lead the way in so many instances to honour and to profit; these the most depraved of sinners will often be found ready and ambitious to perform. But those silent, secret acts of goodness, which are known only to God and ourselves; that simplicity of heart, that disinterested integrity which worldly men so much despise; that patience under suffering, that submission to injury, and that forbearance to enemies, which are so very precious in the sight of heaven; all those saintly qualities, in short, which form the character of the Christian hero, few are they amongst determined and habitual transgressors who ever venture upon such holy practices. How indeed should they be able to do so? We may ridicule the thought if we will, but doubtless there is within us that thing which we call conscience, a feeling suggested by the Spirit of God striving against our iniquity; and every crime upon which we enter is checked by the warnings of this monitor, varying in strength or weakness according to the resistance, which, in the hardness of our hearts, we oppose to its voice. But most severely are the stings of conscience felt when we attempt, after a series of wickedness, to perform some virtuous or religious duty. The contrast between our former and our present conduct then strikes so forcibly upon us, that we are miserable indeed, and can only escape the wretchedness of our

feelings either by leaving off to do well, or leaving off to do evil; either by reforming our lives, or by ceasing altogether to do well—for even peace of mind, and common comfort of life, are denied to all but those who have either relinquished their sins, or turned to the dreadful alternative of hardening their hearts. It is evident, therefore, that so long as we willingly continue to do evil, we cannot willingly begin to learn to do well. But when once, in the strength of a holy resolution, formed and aided by the Spirit of God, we have been enabled to enter upon the work of reformation, and struggle against the corruption of habit and of nature, then it is no longer hateful to us to be instructed in the ways of a holy life. Anxious to be freed from the bondage of iniquity, we are zealous in the pursuit of every work of righteousness, that feeling the peacefulness and pleasantness of wisdom's paths, we never again may turn our wandering feet into the broad and slippery way of sin and everlasting death. I would therefore change the terms without altering the meaning of my text, and not only beseech you in the words of a prophet of God, "to cease to do evil, *and* learn to do well," but also to cease to do evil in order that you may be able and willing to learn to do well.

3. The last thing suggested to us by these

two precepts of Isaiah, is the absolute and unalterable necessity of an obedience to both, to ensure the attainment of everlasting salvation. For the prophet does not give to us a commandment of choice; he does not leave it to our inclination to determine whether we will cease to do evil, *or* learn to do well; his words are authoritative, his decision absolute, his meaning unequivocal—"cease to do evil—learn to do well." Both are commanded with equal force, and with equal earnestness. The precepts of obedience to both are conveyed in the same form, and in similar language. Nearly and intimately connected as the duties are in reality, the connexion between them, is still preserved unimpaired in the writings of the prophet, and in his writings also they are placed in the same order in which they are commonly found to follow each other in the lives of men. First, comes the reformation of vice, and then follows the practice of virtue; but it would be impossible to discover either from Isaiah's style, his manner, or his terms, to which of these two important branches of duty he intended to give the preference, or indeed whether he considered any preference as due to either.

And so also it is in the words of St. Paul,*
"Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which

* Rom. xii. 9.

is good.” And so also it is in the words of St. Peter,* “He that will love life and see good days, let him eschew evil *and* do good.” Obedience to both these is required, and is indispensable to our eternal happiness.

Thus carefully interpreted and strictly understood, the text will afford to us a happy opportunity of correcting two of the most serious errors which can enter into the minds of men with respect to their eternal state. The first error is that of those who consider themselves certain of everlasting happiness, because, trusting in the merits of Christ, they abstain from doing evil, without aiming at eminent virtue. It is possible (if there be degrees in punishment, as in reward) that these men may escape the miserable doom of those greedy workers of iniquity whom, in the latter day, the Lord shall command to go away into everlasting *burnings*—unto the worst worm that dieth not, and the fiercest of the fires that cannot be quenched. But they cannot, must not, look for more than this salvation from the *excess* of misery. To any, even the lowest of the mansions of heaven, they can never reach. To the reward of angels and of saints, to the blessed company of the spirits of just men made perfect, they have no claim. Unprofitable servants they are, and

* 1 Pet. iii. 10, 11.

the destiny of such will be their portion for ever. The Lord Jesus once said, and there cometh a day for judgment, when he will surely say it again —“Cast out these unprofitable servants into outer *darkness*.”—It is enough for them that they have been permitted to escape the extremest wretchedness of hell. But for those who have fallen into the second error, the error of thinking that their good will atone for their evil deeds, there remaineth not even this feeble consolation. These are they who vainly think that if they have great and shining virtues, the merits of Christ will, through their faith, be made effectual to the pardon of all, even the greatest of their transgressions and sins. Vain deluded men, where is the foundation of your hope? In heaven, or upon earth? In the mercy of God, or in the power of your own good works? But know ye not that we are bound to obey God *all* our lives, and with all our strength, and that after we have done all we can do, we have done but what it was our duty to do? How then are we to be pardoned for the guilt of wilful or habitual sin? I know but of one principle upon which such a hope can be built, the baseless visionary thought, that the beauty and usefulness of our good works will atone for the deformity and evil of our unrighteous deeds. Be it, however, remembered by all, that there is but one atonement given to man, the sacrifice of Jesus

Christ upon the cross, a sacrifice which will indeed cover the failings of every sincere and penitent and faithful Christian, but will never hide the wilful sinner from the terrors of judgment, nor cast a veil of mercy over the naked guilt of any allowed or presumptuous sin. Let those who trust to the power of good deeds, for the pardon of evil ones, hear this and tremble, and repent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

After all that I have said, need I, my brethren, any more exhort you to cease to do evil, and learn to do well; or any more tell you that it is only by first ceasing to do evil that you can learn to do well; or any more warn you against the fatal error of thinking that if we cease to do evil we need not learn to do well; or that if we learn to do well there is but little necessity for ceasing to do evil? All my discourse hath been of these things, and if yet I have failed of working conviction in your souls, I fear it much, that by our means no serious or solid or permanent impression can be made. The change, if wrought at all, must be an immediate act of the converting power of the Spirit of God.

My brethren, it is after the most serious inquiries into the rigid nature and amazing extent of our actual duties; it is after most carefully recol-

lecting our own inability and imperfection in the performance of those duties ; it is then we are taught most strongly to feel, and most gratefully to acknowledge the blessings and consolations of the Gospel. Without the grace of God the precepts of the prophet could not be performed at all ; and even with that grace, there liveth not the just man that sinneth not, there liveth not the good man that hath not often forgotten or neglected to do good, when it was in the power of his hand to do it. But we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins, whether of omission or of commission. If truly we have believed in the power of his name, and trusted for pardon to the virtue of his sacrifice ; if strongly we have struggled against the corruption of our flesh ; if we have not madly thought to deceive God by deceiving ourselves ; if we have tried to do what we know we ought to do ; if we have always and duly repented us of the evil, and never fallen without rising again, then will that Saviour wash away in his own blood the stains of our guilt ; and having in this life enabled us in some measure to cease from evil, and learn to do well, will make us, in heaven, to cease altogether from sorrow and from sin, and learn to be righteous and blessed for ever.

DISCOURSE XVI.

EXODUS, chap. xx. ver. 8.

“Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.”

IN casting a religious eye upon the various nations and people of the earth, and endeavouring to separate them according to their different forms of worship and modes of belief, one of the first, because the most obvious, distinctions we are naturally led to draw, is between those who do and those who do not “remember a Sabbath-day.” The savage of the South, and the idolater of the East, toil on from year to year, without any of that comfortable feeling, which, in the Christian world, supports and animates the most sorrowful and laborious of the sons of men, when they think upon that weekly return of repose, which the laws of their country and the religion of their Redeemer have consecrated and enjoined for the observance of all. The worshippers of stocks and of stones have nothing to look forward to but the irregular return of some cruel or some burthensome service to their Gods; no hope to lighten

their labours or wipe away the tears from their eyes, but the horrible hope of some carnal enjoyment or some licentious festival. Their hours are never cheered by the early prospect of a period to their toils, and their hearts are unblessed by the joyful certainty of that happy day, when even on earth “the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest.” If there is one circumstance which more than another ought to call forth the grateful acknowledgments of our souls for the dispensation of the Gospel under which we have been born, it is the observation of the general diffusion of happiness and ease, and the remembrance of that recreation to the worn-out mind, and that recruiting of the wasted strength, which the regular recurrence of the Sabbath affords. I have often heard it remarked by Christians of a serious and devout disposition, to whom the sacred day of rest had become, through habit and principle, a season of hallowed delight, that it seemed to their eyes as if, on the Sabbath, the sun did shine more bright, the works of God appear more beautiful, the fields more fresh, the flowers more sweet, and all the face of nature to wear an unusual and a fitting stillness. It is not that the sun does shine more bright, or that the fields are indeed more fresh, or the flowers more sweet upon this than upon any other day; it is only that we are apt to think thus, because our minds are attuned to

order, and to piety, and to contemplation. It is because our hearts are harmonized by the general repose and regularity around us. We look upon the joyful countenance of man, we hear no strife, we see no sorrow ; labour is at an end, quietness is upon the scene, and our affections are weaned from earthly and fixed upon heavenly things. The goodness of God and the beauty of holiness force themselves into our thoughts, and in the fulness of the feeling we almost fancy that the inanimate creation has been taught to sympathize with the benevolence of our own souls, and to remember, like ourselves, the Sabbath of God. This is mere imagination ; but then it is a godly imagination, and, God forbid, that by pointing out the cause of the delusion, I should rob the amiable mind of any Christian of a pleasing sentiment which he would wish to cherish, and which cannot possibly be productive of any evil effects. We must not however suppose, even in our own native land, blessed as it so wonderfully has been with a form of pure and undefiled religion, that the same feelings of reverence are experienced by every Christian on the Lord's sacred day. The truth must be told, though it be a melancholy truth, and we must needs allow that every thing is not equally suitable to the rest, nor every person equally observant of the holiness, of the Sabbath. Go forth where you will, go forth into our villages,

into our cities, into our streets, and every where in the land you will indeed see multitudes rejoicing and “*remembering* the Sabbath-day.” But then the pleasing sensation which this scene of general rest and joyfulness creates, must ever be checked and chastened by another and a most important difference, which cannot but be remarked and lamented; the difference, I mean, between those who do and those who do not remember the Sabbath-day to *keep it HOLY*.

1. There are a thousand causes which contribute to mislead mankind with regard to the proper method of preserving the holiness of the Lord’s day. There are a thousand accidents of station, of habit, of education, and of pursuits, which combine to continue many well-meaning persons in the practice of neglecting or profaning the sacredness of the Sabbath. I cannot unravel, or even warn you specifically against all these dangers. But there is one most fatal and most prevailing error which must not pass away unobserved and uncensured, because it springs from an ignorance, or a misunderstanding of the *end* of the institution, and strikes, therefore, at the very foundation upon which the solemnity of the season is built. The Sabbath-day is, being interpreted, the day of *rest*, and in considering it under this point of view, there are many who would seem to

regard it as nothing more than a day of rest, as a gracious permission only from the Almighty to abstain from labour, without incurring the guilt or the penalty of idleness. They forget that it is a *command*, to set apart a portion of their time for the nourishment of their souls. They look upon it only as a boon from the benevolence of heaven, granted in compassion to the rugged destinies of man's nature, and as a moment bestowed in kindness to give him an opportunity of wiping away the sweat from his brow. They therefore think that if they choose to labour on the seventh day, they have a right to refuse the favour which they do not desire, and pursue without interruption the occupations of life. Mistaken thought! The refreshment of the body is indeed one great reason for the institution of a day of rest, and if we do not want that bodily ease, we need not *on that account* abstain from toil. But there is something more in the Sabbath than this. It is not only a gift from the mercy, but a commandment from the power of God. It is not only a permission that we *may*, but an order that we *must* cease from every manner of worldly and unnecessary work. It is a day of rest for the sake of holiness, a vacancy from employment to afford an opportunity of giving heed unto spiritual things. It is a quitting of all temporal concerns to apply ourselves to those which belong unto our

salvation. Rest is the thing enjoined, but holiness is the end and the motive of the injunction, and under this view of the subject no one is excepted from the observance of the Sabbath as a day of utter abstinence from all his common cares, and thoughts, and pursuits. Whether high or low, rich or poor, wise or simple, master or servant, parent or child, husband or wife, men or women, all are bound on this day to give their time and faculties to religion—to rest, that they may be holy. Covetousness, therefore, can be no excuse for our continuing to labour in our vocation on the Lord's day; for covetousness is the very enemy of all holiness. Neither do the cares, nor the studies, nor the glory, nor the love, nor the business, of the world afford a better plea. If we will be busy at all upon the Sabbath, we must be busy about our souls. If we will care for any thing it must be for the cares of eternity. If we will be concerned for any thing, it must be for the concerns of religion; if anxious for any glory, it must be for the glory of angels; if desirous of any love, it must be for the love of God. For this is the *Lord's* day and not man's, and he therefore must needs be counted sinful on this day, who would steal away its hours from the Being to whom they belong. This then is the *first* of our duties in remembering to keep holy the Sabbath-day, that we be very careful indeed to rest from

our usual employment upon that day, because without this rest we cannot even have time to be holy.

2. Rest from labour alone is not holiness, but rest from sinning is. Rest from labour affords only the means of becoming holy, but rest from sinning makes us so. The great foundation of the holiness of the Sabbath must therefore be laid in a thorough innocence of work, of word, and of thought, and an earnest endeavour by influence and exhortation to teach others also to follow the example of our innocence. The nature of sin is ever the same; and on any and every day it is hateful to God and punishable in man. But on the Sabbath-day, sanctified as it has been to the peculiar purposes of godliness and devotion, the sinfulness of sin becomes exceeding sinful. Its guilt grows more dark and its deformity more hideous, when contrasted with the general piety which pervades the scene. I very well remember having once stood, at the close of the Sabbath, on the brink of a grave, committing to its native dust the body of one who had gone the way of all flesh. We were in prayer, and the friends of the departed stood weeping round the grave, listening in solemn piety to the impressive and affecting words of our burial service. All were wrapt in sorrowful thought, in deep meditation

upon salvation and their souls; upon the mercy and the justice of God; upon the shortness, and the dangers, and the duties of life: upon heaven and hell; upon the fate of him who had gone before, and the fate of themselves who were to follow after. We were in prayer, when one came by full of rioting and drunkenness, and blaspheming the name and the creatures of the Creator. The voice of cursing polluted the prayers of the mourners, and ascended to the throne of the Almighty, mingled with hopes for the dead, and supplication for the living. In the minds of those who were present and heard the words of blasphemy, a feeling of devout horror was created, and the hearts of all experienced, for the moment at least, the duty and the necessity of remembering to keep and to make holy the Sabbath-day. Oh that we were ever seriously impressed with a sense of this necessity, and would persevere in the duty of endeavouring to prevent the world from being shocked by such visible and disgraceful violations of the Sabbath's sanctity. For surely such things ought not to be. Surely we are bound to call forth every energy under every character which we bear, as ministers, as masters, as parents, as magistrates, and as Christians, to close the avenues to sin upon the Lord's day, and having enjoined it to be a day of rest, to make it also to be a day of holiness. Profanations of the Lord's day, as

open and as aggravated as that which I have mentioned, are, I trust, but of rare occurrence in any Christian community. But the principle of that condemnation which I have passed upon it, may be applied to every deviation from duty on the Sabbath, however minute. Every deviation from duty is on that day a disgusting and a deadly sin. Unholy thoughts, unholy words, unholy deeds, at other times might pass away, and like many other "secret faults," be remembered no more. But on this sacred day they assume the features of "presumptuous sins." Boisterous mirth, idle words, "foolish and filthy talking, and jesting, which are" on other days "not convenient," are on this without excuse. The sacredness of the day itself condemns them, and we think within ourselves what a mass of impurity that man must be, who even on the Sabbath is unable to preserve the forms of decency.

3. To enable us to keep a guard over our thoughts, and to guide our ways in righteousness upon the Lord's day, one thing is indispensable; and that is an attendance upon the public service of the church. It is indispensable to *all*, and indispensable not only for the sake of the form and example of godliness which it sets forth to others, but also for its own intrinsic worth and importance. It matters not who they be—in their

places in the church ought *every* Christian to be found on the Lord's day ; if ignorant, they should come that they may be instructed ; if wise, that they may be reminded of their duty ; if rich and prosperous, that they may be warned of their danger, and prepared for adversity ; if poor and in affliction, that they may be comforted in their suffering, and gather contentment and consolation at the feet of Jesus ; if pious, or penitent, or sinful, that they may praise and pray to their Maker. But I trust it is needless to press upon your minds an obligation which is universally acknowledged. It is rather requisite to turn your thoughts to the feelings with which you should be imbued, and the object you should have in view, when you appear within these sacred walls. There is not a more common, or a more mistaken sentiment, than to suppose that we have done our duty by merely coming to the church. We come to the church *to do* our duty, and that duty cannot be said to be faithfully done, until we have closed the service with devotion, and returned to our homes with the answer of a good conscience towards God. It is the mere mockery of religion to seek for the charms of eloquence alone in the house of the Lord. I have often said it, and I think I cannot say it too often, that it is the things which the ministers of God speak, rather than the manner of their speaking, which will engage the

peculiar attention of every godly heart. I feel the awful responsibility of the sacred office. I humbly confess that it is the power of the Spirit which alone can give efficacy to the word of man ; and I ask forgiveness of my God, if ever, in the vanity of a foolish imagination, I have sought to please rather than to profit mankind. Calling to remembrance, therefore, that though we preach weakly, we preach as the ministers of Christ, and declare the mysteries which we have studied and approved ; we would beseech you to listen to the things which are spoken with an attentive ear, and a teachable disposition ; and then you may have some hope of being saved by your hearing, however vain and valueless may appear the words which we utter, when weighed in the balance of a human understanding. But we come not here to be taught our duty alone, we come also to ask forgiveness for its violation, and for power to fulfil it. We come to pray to our Maker through the mediation of our Redeemer, and that is a service before which every other must sink into very nothingness. What profit then shall we have from our prayers, if they be poured forth in carelessness or indifference ? Our faults cannot be hid from him we pray to. He is the "Searcher of hearts, and seeth all our ways." Each wandering eye, each wandering thought is written upon the tablets of his eternal mind, and

will be judged in the balance of his unerring equity. To check the wandering eye, to recall the wandering thought, and to fix the heart in earnest sincerity upon devotion, is the least return that we can make for the privilege of prayer. I would almost recommend that in the house of God we should forget the transitory relations of life. For heaven is the place upon which our thoughts are to be fixed, and, "in heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage." In heaven there is neither rich nor poor, bond or free, minister or people, but all are the children of the same Father, and brethren of the same Lord. It is to that common and heavenly relation, therefore, that we should principally look, when in the house of our common and heavenly Father; and endeavouring to embrace the whole generation of mankind in the capacious bosom of an universal love, prepare ourselves for an affection which shall not be perishable, like the affections of this world, but endure for everlasting, unimpaired and unsubdued.

4. Such are the feelings and views by which we may render our public devotions holy and acceptable unto God. But it is not in God's temple alone that we must remember to keep holy the Sabbath. It is not the morning or the evening hour of the Sabbath alone which is to be

sanctified, but it is “the Sabbath-day.” Every where and in every thing the day is to be kept holy ; from the moment in which we open our eyes upon the light, to the moment in which they are again closed in slumber ; and it will little avail us to have visited the house of God, if we carry not away with us the feelings of piety it had raised, into our families and our homes. Godly exercises and godly meditations must still be pursued after we have left this place, and we must retire from the church to commune with our own hearts, and in our chambers, and be still ; to study the words and works of the Almighty, and muse upon the wonders of that Redemption which has been wrought for man. The Sabbath should be snatched from the world and given to the world’s Maker.

5. Yet I would not shut up the social affections in gloomy austerity, or deaden the finer feelings of the heart by forbidding them to beam forth upon this sacred day. Gloominess is not holiness. The social affections are the gift of heaven, and I know of no gift of heaven which it was not intended that we should exercise, under proper restrictions, and when directed towards honest and legitimate objects. It is only requisite that on the Sabbath-day our feelings should be kept in due subordination under the influence of

piety. After having given to God and to devotion a due portion of our time and thoughts, we may then fearlessly enter the society of the good. I say the society of the *good*—for upon this day it is our more peculiar duty to banish from our tables and our homes every worker of iniquity. It is a day upon which we should have no fellowship whatever with the wicked or their wickedness, “but rather reprove them” by our righteous deeds. But if, choosing our companions from among the virtuous, we let our conversation be devout, and honest, and open as the day; and our cheerfulness as pure as the innocence of an infant’s thought, we need not fear that we shall forget the Sabbath-day, or forget to keep it holy: and I know of no commandment which ordains that its holiness should be kept in solitude.

I have drawn but a brief and feeble outline of the duties of the Sabbath. But they are many and important, and they are attended with this peculiar advantage, that they have a tendency to produce a general holiness of life. If for six days we were to wanton in all the varied forms of iniquity, and on the seventh alone to obey the wisdom of the just, its holiness were vain and valueless indeed. But it is scarcely possible for a Sabbath which has been religiously kept, not to diffuse some little portion of seriousness over the

rest of the week. Prayers devoutly offered, and instructions willingly received, are not wont to vanish away like a shadow and leave no trace of their existence behind. There is always some faint recollection, some conscientious yearnings after what has been done and heard ; and a man who has been long sincerely accustomed to sanctify the Sabbath, by innocence, by devotion, and by holy converse with his family, will at length learn to do the same, in part at least, on every other day of the week. “To-morrow” (he will say, when tempted) “is the day of my devotion to God and to his commandments. How then can I do this great wickedness to-day, and hope to be aided by the Spirit to perform the duties of that morrow ?” “Yesterday” (he will say again) “I did sincerely worship the Lord my God—how then can I do this great wickedness to-day, and sin against the Being whom I so lately adored ?” Against reflections like these, few temptations would avail ; and to many Sabbaths, would be added many years of holiness. But, whether men do or do not remember the Sabbath-day, and whether they do or do not remember to keep it holy ; one thing is sure, that without holiness we *cannot* see the Lord. When I say this, I do not allude to the vengeance of God excluding us from heaven and condemning us to hell. I would at any time rather remember his mercy. Neither

do I speak of “the blood of that covenant which we tread under foot” whenever we neglect its commands. I speak of the absolute impossibility of the thing. I speak of our utter unfitness without holiness to enter into the kingdom of God, or if we did enter in, to enjoy it. Therefore, “*Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy,*” and by its holiness to sanctify the rest of your life; knowing that there is one everlasting Sabbath in heaven, one eternal rest from labour unto holiness which, if you are not holy here, you cannot and you will not be permitted to keep.

DISCOURSE XVII.

P A R T I.

LUKE chap. ii. ver. 2.

“And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.”

SINCERITY is the soul of an effectual prayer, and when a good and pious man kneels down in unfeigned humility to ask the blessing of heaven, whether in his chamber or in the church, God will not be extreme to mark either his error or his ignorance in asking. There are other qualities which may recommend our piety both in the eyes of mortals and our Maker. There are other qualities which may give beauty to holiness, but it is sincerity which gives life, and spirit, and power, to devotion. Take away sincerity, and the man of godliness dieth and turneth again to the original corruption of his nature. The breath of the

Spirit of God leaveth him, and his spiritual strength faileth him, and he liveth no more unto the Lord, and the light of the Sun of Righteousness shineth upon him no more.

Great are the benefits of sincerity in religion ; but then he that thinks himself to be sincere, must be careful to prove himself to be so ; and he that would prove himself sincere must be careful to do the things which belong unto sincerity. Now of sincerity in prayer there is no surer or less suspicious testimony than an earnest desire to know the things we ought to pray for, and a constant endeavour to learn the form, the manner, and the substance, in which we ought to pray. He that truly and indeed wishes to offer up his petitions to Almighty God in an acceptable way, will apply to every one whom he considers able to teach him what to ask, and authorized to tell him how to ask it. For it is no easy task to suit our prayers to our wants, and wishes, and feelings, and thoughts, or to express them in language which may become our situation and affect our heart. The blessings we ask, and the manner of our asking, should vary with our varying circumstances and conditions ; and the anguish of the penitent, or the trembling hope of the returning sinner, would flow but ill and unseemly from the lips of the persevering saint, rejoicing in his holi-

ness and confiding in his God. The voice of joy and thankfulness in the midst of mercies received, is very different from the plaintive tones of the mourner humbled in his affliction; and he who sorrowfully seeks a consolation from heaven for what he has lost, could never utter, with force or with feeling, the glowing words of gratitude and praise which animate and expand the heart, when it confesses that it has been comforted. Each state and each vicissitude of life—weakness and power—riches and poverty—have all their proper subjects and manner of addressing the Almighty God. The sounds of sadness, which are so affecting and instructive when we go to the house of mourning, would perhaps neither affect nor instruct us at all when we meet in gladness in the house of feasting. And even the dispensation and religion under which we live—the terrors of the Law of Moses, and the mercies of the Gospel of Jesus, require different forms and methods, and degrees of worship; because there is a difference also in the views, and the hopes, and the fears, which they inspire. The Israelite and Christian often cannot and ought not to pray the same prayers, or in the same manner, because the circumstances of a human being, and the thoughts and feelings, and desires of the human mind, are not and cannot be the same in both covenants.

Under the influence of sentiments like these, sincere but ignorant, feeling their wants, and conscious of their weakness, the followers of Jesus came to their Master, and said unto him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." The ears of Jesus were ever open to the reasonable requests of those who questioned, without tempting him. He was touched with a feeling of their infirmities, "and he said unto them" and in them to all who bear or shall bear the holy name of Christians, even to the latest generations of the world; and in them to us hath he said, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in Heaven."

"*When ye pray.*" No matter when—whether in the morning or in the evening, or at noon-day, whether with the lisping innocence of infancy, the uncorrupted thoughts of youth, the understanding mind of manhood, or the decaying powers and faculties of age; no matter at what period of the day or of life we offer up the devotion of the heart to God—one form of utterance is commanded for all. No matter either what be the condition or circumstances of our being; whether in pain, in penury, or penitence; whether weak, or wise, or wealthy, or wretched; in the smiles of a marriage or in the tears of a death; rejoicing with those who are, or mourning for those that are not; in the gloom or in the glory of our

days; loved or hated, high or low, honoured or despised; be it in hope or disappointment, in gladness or in grief, in our living energies, or in our dying agonies, still the words of Jesus sound the same. Still he saith to all who acknowledge themselves to be “his disciples,” “when *ye* pray, say, Our Father which art in Heaven.”

Blessed and comprehensive form of words! Almighty Father of all, Father of all that was, and is, and is to come; Father of every thing that hath, and of every thing that hath not, within it the breath of life; Creator of the heavens and of the earth; Creator of the Spirits that people the air, and that dwell unnumbered about thine own everlasting throne; Creator of all creatures that live and move and have their being upon the face of this habitable globe; Creator of the fowls of the air, and of the fishes of the sea, and of the beasts of the field, and of creeping things innumerable; Creator of *man*; Father of our souls and of our bodies; Great Source of all we are, and have, and hope for; to thee, the only, the Eternal, Parent of the Universe, we lift our earth-born thoughts in the humility of prayer, when we bid our tongues obey the commands of our Master, and address thee as “*Our* Father which art in Heaven.” Our Father thou art, because thou hast formed us out of the dust of the ground.

Our Father thou art, because thou hast adopted us into the children of thine inheritance. Our Father, because thou hast spiritually begotten us, that we might be called the Sons of God. Our Father, because we are the brethren and thou art the very Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. In all these glorious attributes, under all these varied forms of creation, we look up to thee when we call upon thee as our Father. Our Father too *which art in Heaven*, and therefore as heavenly, and not upon the earth, and therefore not as earthly, do we call thee. To none upon the earth do we call, for they being earthly, could neither hear nor help us according to our wants. But God dwelleth above all, in the height and in the holiness of the spiritual firmament of Heaven. A Spirit, therefore, he is, and so the discerner of our spirits; holy, and so a lover and rewarder of the holy; high and above all, and therefore able to look into the very innermost chambers of the heart, and wont to perceive our necessities before we ask, and to give more than either we desire or deserve.

To this great object of worship, then, it is, that our Saviour hath taught us to pray, saying, "Our Father which art in heaven," and whilst in these endearing words we acknowledge ourselves to be by nature and by grace the sons and

daughters of the Almighty, we are unconsciously led to be grateful for the relation we bear to him, and to call to mind the manifold duties which we owe to the greatness, and the manifold mercies we have received from the goodness of our parent. For we have had fathers according to the flesh, who gave unto us our present transitory tabernacle of clay, and they when we were in the helplessness of childhood, did protect, by their kindness, the being of which they were the authors; did train us when we were young in the way in which we should go, and corrected us when we departed therefrom; and when we grew up to be men and women, they did still watch over our interests, and strengthen us by their counsel, and never ceased from their parental tenderness till the gates of death and the grave were closed for ever upon their labours and their cares. Therefore we did give them reverence. And shall we not much more revere the Father of our Spirits, who is above and for ever? For death hath no power, the grave hath no victory, against the mighty God. He is an enduring Father, whom the chances of mortality cannot reach. Eternal in the Heavens, and unchangeable through all eternity, so long as we live to want, so long will he live to grant his aid—a guardian both able and willing to protect the helpless, to instruct the ignorant, chasten the wayward for their profit, recall from

wandering the perverse, keep those that are obedient in the way, and watch without ceasing for the welfare of all the children of his mercy upon earth. Such are the wonderful blessings which in every turn and stage of his existence each member of the Christian family derives from the filial relation which he bears to the great Author of his being. What reward then shall be given for these greater benefits than any of our earthly fathers could possibly bestow? I know not what return we miserable creatures can offer. But of this I am sure, that it were impossible for any godly person to remember such blessings and be thankless. If not impossible, it were, at any rate, very wicked, for any Christian to call upon the God of Heaven as *his* Father by creation and by adoption, and not in gratitude to reverence his name. When ye pray, therefore, say, not only “Our Father which art in Heaven,” but add also the first of those petitions which the Lord hath taught us in his prayer, and say further, “Hallowed be thy name.”

Say the prayer and feel it, my brethren. Be not as the hypocrites are, who say and do not; but whilst your lips are repeating the holy words of your lord and master, let your hearts be warmed with the same holy affections, which so pre-eminently dignified the obedience of your

Redeemer. In life and in death, as a child and as man, in his miracles, and in his sufferings, in the Garden, and on the Cross, the name and nature of God, as his Father, were hallowed and sacred in the soul of Christ. “*Father*, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” “*Father*, into thy hands I commend my Spirit.” Such were the words of resignation by which Jesus hallowed the name of God in the worst trials of his humiliation, in his passion, and in his agony. Whilst ye, therefore, are outwardly praying the form of his prayer, desire inwardly the frame of his mind. Desire that your hearts, like his, may hallow the name of God Almighty, always and every where; and always and every where keep unspotted the reverence that is due to the holiness of the universal Father; neither being lifted by prosperity into a forgetfulness of his sacred character, nor driven by adversity to curse your God and die. Seek earnestly that the name of God may be so hallowed by you, that the very idea of his nature may be sanctified in your hearts, and neither his acts, his words, his existence, nor his attributes, be ever spoken or thought of without feelings of the most reverential awe.

Yet even thus ye will not have fulfilled all that was meant by the words of Jesus. “Hallowed be thy name,” O God! is a petition which none

can be said to utter with sincerity but those who desire that the name of that God may be hallowed *by all, and every where*—may be hallowed, not only by themselves, but by every creature under heaven, who can call upon God as his Father—by every son of man who is the work of the Almighty's hand. But how can they call upon God as their Father who is in heaven, who know him not for their Father, and believe him not to be in heaven; but have changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator? Or how can they hallow the name or reverence the nature of Almighty God who “have changed his incorruptible glory into the image of a corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things?” Yet such there are upon the face of this earth; children of darkness, serving their idols in cruelty and lust, full of uncleanness and fornication, without understanding and without godliness; dwellers in the east and in the west, in the north and in the south. And such once were we. But we have been cleansed, but we have been sanctified, through the knowledge of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is “the wisdom of God unto salvation.” The fathers of our land were once heathens in the world, worshippers of images which their own hands had made: and striving, in the vanity of

their imaginations, to make an atonement to an offended Deity, by the foolish and sinful sacrifices of iniquity and blood. But God visited us in his mercy ; turned our darkness into marvellous light ; converted us from the power of Satan unto the obedience of Christ, and taught us to pity the wretched condition of those, who, like the degraded and ignorant Indian, are taught from their youth a religion of sin, and pass from death unto eternity the deluded followers of the filth and foolishness of idolatry. If these men, therefore, are to be raised from among the spiritually dead, it is Christ who must give life to *them*, as he hath given it to *us*. If the name of our Father which is in Heaven is ever to be hallowed amongst them, it must be, as it has been with us, through the knowledge of Christianity. Turn we, then, in compassion, to the lost and miserable estate of the Heathen, to pray the next petition which the prayer of our Lord hath taught us, saying, “ Thy kingdom come.”

Oh! merciful Father of light and life, thou that hearest the voice of them that come unto thee, and givest wisdom liberally unto them that ask it of thee in faith and nothing wavering, hear us, we most humbly beseech thee, in our intercessions for our degraded and deluded brethren. Visit and reveal the word of thy truth to the

people that are sitting in darkness, and give the knowledge of redemption, through the blood of Jesus, to them that are in the bonds of sin, and under the shadow of spiritual death. Grant that, like us, the unbeliever and the idolater may be made the subjects of the kingdom of thy Son, become holy members of his mystical body, which is the Church, and be counted among thy children by adoption and grace. This is the spirit and the substance of our request, when we pray “that thy kingdom may come;” because we know, that they cannot hallow thy name, who are unacquainted with thy nature and thy will, and that none can become acquainted with thy nature and thy will, unless they be taught it by the operations of thy Spirit, and the revelation of the pure and undefiled religion of the Bible. Therefore, that our former petition, for the hallowing of thy name, may be faithfully accomplished amongst men, we further ask, that thy Gospel kingdom may come in the fulness of its power and extent, and all the kingdoms of the earth become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

It is a very great blessing to be of the number of the faithful, and we have that blessing. It is one of the mightiest mercies of God when he communicates the truth unto a nation. And he has

communicated it unto us. But the truth may be held in unrighteousness, and the name of God as little hallowed amongst a people that call upon the Lord Jesus, and do not his will, as amongst those who know him not, and worship him not. I stay not to inquire how far *we* may be guilty as concerning this thing, but, doubtless, we cannot but be conscious of our many sins and imperfections, and cannot but have felt how much the happiness of the world has been blasted by those who have forgotten the great Gospel-commandment of brotherly love. Neither can we be ignorant how much and how often the name of God has been blasphemed amongst the unbelieving Gentiles and Jews through the disobedience of them that believe. For faith without works is dead—dead both for the conversion of others and the redemption of ourselves. It is very needful, therefore, for us to pray for every Christian, that he may add virtue to his faith, that so both his own soul may be saved, and all who bow not at the name of Jesus may be convinced by the loveliness of his example, and turn unto the Father and Bishop of their souls, whom they have rejected because of the iniquities of his nominal children. We may pray for the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God may come; but except it come as the kingdom of righteousness, as well as of truth, and except it

come with the power as well as the profession of godliness, vain and useless will be its coming. The name of God may be hallowed by the lips, but except it be hallowed by the heart, what is it? We may pray to God as our Father, but except we act as becomes the sons of God, it is nothing. Now, they only act as sons, who as sons are obedient, and they only hallow the name of God in their hearts, who in their hearts do sincerely study to adorn the doctrine of God and their Saviour in all things. It is very needful, therefore, to pass on to the third petition of this blessed form of prayer, and pray, in the words which it hath taught us, not only that the name of God may be hallowed, and his kingdom come, but also that his *will* may “be done upon earth,” as it is by the angels in heaven; in all the fulness and perfection and universality of a willing mind. For then this earth itself would be like heaven—a heaven of holiness, and therefore of happiness, without sorrow, because without iniquity.

We have as yet passed through but half the prayer of our Lord, and time would fail me at present, to consider it in every part. But, even thus imperfectly considered, how beautiful and comprehensive, and universal, is the prayer. It leads us on to piety by the softest sympathies of our nature. It, first of all, paints the God whom

we adore, in the most endearing relation in which he can be regarded by fallen man, and so banishes fear and enlivens hope. It speaks of him as our heavenly Father; a Father, perfect and eternal in tenderness and in watchfulness, in wisdom and in care. Having thus endeared him to our thoughts in his parental character, it very naturally teaches us to pray that his name may be held in universal reverence, and, as the only *means* of accomplishing this desirable end, we are further commanded to pray that his kingdom may come and his will be done; that the knowledge of the truth and the practice of the righteousness of the Gospel may be spread to the extremest corners of the world, and be professed and performed by every individual amongst the earthly sons of Adam, with the same readiness and regularity as by the heavenly sons of God. These are requests in which every one may join, and which correspond to the wants and wishes of mankind in every state. They are requests which will suit with every condition; for the views which are thus displayed, are those which give gladness even to prosperity, and consolation even in adversity. They set before us the intimate connexion, in which, through Christ, we stand towards God; and by impressing upon us the primary duties of reverence to his name, belief in his word, and obedience to his will, are calculated, above all

things, to direct our feet into the ways of righteousness and peace, to instruct our minds in the wisdom of revelation, and lift our affections from the transitory gratifications of earthly joy to fix them upon the pure and imperishable pleasures of heavenly things.

More than this at present we cannot say, but surely we have said enough to induce us to bow down in adoration before the throne of Heaven, and to thank our Father and our God for that he hath taught us thus to pray, and to beseech him to give us a heart and a mind to understand and to feel it.

DISCOURSE XVIII.

P A R T II.

MATT. chap. vi. ver. 11—13.

“ Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil ; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

THINGS spiritual and things temporal,—these are the only things that men can want or wish. The life that now is, and the life that is to come—these are the only states of being upon which man is doomed to enter. Both are ordained for him by Providence ; and whether he wander in his mortal body upon the earth, or stand with the immortal body of his resurrection before the throne of the Almighty, Providence can still make that body to be the seat of pleasure or of pain, and assign to him a portion either of wretchedness or bliss. It is to God, therefore, that we

must pray, whether we desire the things that are, or the things that are not, seen ; and whether we seek to be sustained and comforted here, or to be received and blessed hereafter. But then, the lasting and fundamental difference which there is between what we are, as strangers and pilgrims upon the earth below, and what we shall be, as saints and sons of God in Heaven above, must never be forgotten or confounded, in the prayer of a godly mind. What is time when compared with eternity ? It is but as the little tributary stream which runneth away apace, and hasteneth to mingle its scanty waters with the living waves, and be lost for ever in the boundless immensity of the ocean. God forbid, then, that we should ever be found to regard the course of this transitory life as more worthy the attention of our thoughts, than the awful greatness of that eternity to which it tends. God forbid, that we should lust after things carnal and temporal, either more often or more sincerely, than after things everlasting and spiritual. Yet Nature will be heard, when she claims from us an attention to the concerns of our bodies as well as of our souls ; and neither reason nor religion demand that we should refuse to listen to the voice of Nature upon those occasions in which she requires the satisfaction only of the innocent desires and feelings of our hearts. We may, therefore,

righteously wish and devoutly pray, that the course of this world may run smooth, untroubled by sorrow, and unsullied by impurity. This only doth the Lord require at our hands, that we should not reckon the sufferings or the blessings which fall upon man on this side the grave, as worthy to be compared with those sufferings and blessings which are revealed to him beyond it. This only doth the Lord expect in our devotions, that, first of all we should seek the “kingdom of God and his righteousness;” after which we may lawfully venture to pour forth the desires of our hearts, for raiment, for a dwelling, and for food.

Such is the preference of heavenly to earthly things, which the Lord himself hath taught us, when commanding us to *begin* to pray in those holy words, whose meaning and power I endeavoured to impress upon you in my last Discourse. We were there instructed, first of all to turn in piety to the great Author of our being and hopes, and to pray that his name may be revered, his truth made known, his religion accepted, and his laws obeyed by every creature upon earth, with the same willingness and universality with which they are obeyed amongst the angels in Heaven. When we have thus fulfilled our duty in praying for things spiritual, and for others,

then, and then only, are we authorized to turn our views to things temporal, and to ourselves. When we have said, "Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven;" then, and not till then, are we permitted to utter a petition for food, that we may live. Then, and not till then, do we read, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Do thou, O Father, *give us* our daily bread; because thou art our father, because, as children, we are helpless and dependent upon thee, and look not to others for the continuance, any more than for the commencement, of our being. Give it us, for, whether we eat or drink, we must needs acknowledge, in our utter helplessness and dependency, that it is the gift of thy unmerited mercy. We may haste to rise up early, and we may late take rest, but we cannot eat even the bread of carefulness in the sweat of our brow, except it be the will of God that we should eat it, and except his goodness should be pleased to grant success to the labours of our heads and of our hands. Therefore it is, that the Saviour of the world hath enjoined us to ask of God, that he would *give us* our daily bread, and in asking it as a gift, to confess and feel how altogether we hang upon his fatherly kindness and care, and how

entirely it is his doing, that for very want we die not.

Not for more than daily *bread*, not for more than a sufficiency of that food, which is convenient for us, hath the Lord commanded us to pray; and even of that food, simple as it is, we are not, as Christians, journeying towards a better country, permitted to be unduly covetous or careful. The mere necessities and decencies of life are all that we must ask, and them only for the passing hour. We are not to ask positively even for the sustenance of the morrow; because we know not what that morrow may require, or whether we may live till the morrow to want that food. And, even though our souls should not be required of us this night, still we ought not to look with anxiety beyond the present day, because that would be to take a sinful thought for the future, and to distrust the care of that merciful Providence, of whom it were most ungrateful to suppose, that he would do less for us, than for the lilies of the field or the lonely sparrow. The young ravens do call upon the Lord, and he feedeth them, and the lions, who lack and suffer hunger, like ourselves, are, in Scripture, spoken of as “seeking their meat, from God.” Jesus, therefore, hath taught his disciples to do the same, because it would ill become a reasonable yet dependent creature, who

has been endued with a tongue to utter, and an understanding to perceive both his wants and their remedy, to be more silent or less wise than the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air. But forasmuch as there is a manifest uncertainty in human life, and a needless anxiety for the future might injure our powers of providing for our present necessities, man has been mercifully as well as justly, taught, to confine his prayers within the limits of a single day, and to say only "Give us, *this day*,* our daily bread."

Were we ourselves, my brethren, to have framed a prayer for the general use of mankind, the sensual and interested desires of the heart would have led us to think of the glory, and the gaiety, and the wealth, and the power, and the luxury of this world. All things deceitful, all things vain, would have glittered before our eyes. All things which bear the semblance of beauty and desirableness to the outward man, would have been earnestly and anxiously sought for, whilst all things truly valuable and beneficial in a spiritual sense would have been forgotten or unuttered. Our words would have teemed with error, and in almost every sentence we should have been praying for something foolish or hurtful, for some

* Luke xi. 3, we read, "day by day," which amounts to the same thing.

disease to our bodies or some misery to our souls. I speak the words of soberness and truth, although I seem to speak strongly. For what could corrupted man be expected to pray for, if left to himself, were it not for the things of this world? And they that do pray for such things; they that pray for luxuries, do they not, as it were, pray for those diseases and dangers of which luxuries are the parent and the nurse? And they that pray for wealth and glory, and splendor and power, do they not, as it were, almost pray for those sins, to which these foolish and hurtful vanities afford so many serious temptations? It is impossible, say the Scriptures of truth, for rich and great men, without the special assistance of Heaven, so to administer their riches and their greatness, as to become worthy to enter into the kingdom of God. Our Saviour, therefore, with that intimate knowledge of the wickedness and deceitfulness of the human heart, which marked his precepts and declarations upon every occasion, hath taught us to pray neither for wealth nor for want, because both extremes are attended with so many dangers to our eternal welfare; and neither for prosperity nor adversity, because the snares of death and destruction are so thickly sown among the paths of both. His prayer is the prayer of Agur simplified. Give me neither riches nor poverty, feed me with food, and clothe me with raiment con-

venient for me, lest I be full and forget or deny my God ; or lest I be poor, and steal, and blaspheme instead of hallowing his holy name. Such were the objects of desire to that wise and humble man ; and so, but more simply, speaks the Saviour of the world—" Give us this day our daily bread." So bless the labours of our heads and of our hands, and so crown our care and industry with a reasonable success, that we may thereby be enabled to obtain, from day to day, the things that are necessary for the support of our life, and becoming our stations and calling in the world.

There are but two remarks more which the consideration of this petition suggests to our minds. It is impossible not to observe, in the first place, that, limited and submissive, and moderate as a request for daily and necessary food is in itself, it is the only portion of the Lord's prayer which at all refers to the supply of the temporal and bodily wants of man. The rest is altogether employed in making provision for the concerns of the soul and of eternity ; and perhaps there is no other method by which we could have been more clearly and forcibly impressed with the sentiments of our Saviour, upon the comparative value and importance of the present and the future world. The life that now is, is touched upon by him but slightly and but once. The

world that is to come, pervades the whole of his prayer. In the second place, we are taught by the very terms of the request, the duty and the necessity of daily devotion. For when we are commanded to ask for the food and raiment which are convenient for us, only for a single day, we are most assuredly bound to ask for them every day. The prayer for daily bread must be a daily prayer.

Sufficient unto the day is all that we desire, and yet it is more than we deserve, because of the manifold and great transgressions of which we have been so repeatedly guilty. It is evident, then, that, however regular and constant may be our prayers for daily bread, we cannot reasonably expect that they will be answered by him we pray to, unless we have done all in our power to remove the demerit of sin, and place ourselves in such a posture before the throne of grace, as may render us meet to receive the mercies of Heaven. It were not more in vain for any child to look for kindness at the hands of a father, with whom he was at enmity, than for any Christian to depend for support upon a God before whom he was not justified. Or even should our daily prayer prove effectual in obtaining our daily bread, still it would profit us but little to receive and to eat that bread, did we not feel assured in

our hearts that we had our heavenly Father for our friend. Ye have heard how that all the Israelites did eat angels' food, and were fed with Manna in the wilderness. Yet with some of them God was not well pleased, though, to fulfil the purposes of his own inscrutable wisdom, he thus condescended to feed them by a miracle. They sinned grievously and frequently against him, and their sins were not forsaken, and therefore not forgiven, and so there fell, among them, in one day, five-and-twenty thousand men. God is not changed with the progress of years and of revelation; for with him "there is neither variable-ness nor shadow of turning." He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and will as certainly condemn and punish the evil-doers now, as he did the evil-doers then. If, therefore, we bear within our bosoms the burthen of crimes unrepented and unatoned for, it may be, that, though we receive our food and raiment as a gift from heaven to-day, God on the morrow shall visit us in his wrath, and the storm may fall upon us, or war come to slay us, or the pestilence to devour us, or we may sicken and die. And should such or any similar calamity befall us in this world, what then will it profit us to say, that yesterday we prayed for our daily bread, and yesterday received it? But even should we not be visited for our iniquities in this world, and

should our wants continue to be graciously supplied from day to day, still if we carry about with us a conscience weighed down with the terrors arising from unpardoned sin, it matters little how long, or in what state of life we live. God hath caused the sun to rise both upon the just and upon the unjust, but it is to the just alone that the beauty of his rising is wont to bring cheerfulness of countenance and gladness of heart. In the same manner do all the mercies of a benevolent Providence fall unblest upon the heads and hearts of the unrighteous; and to him that eateth his bread in the bitterness of a spirit wounded with the recollection of unforgiven offences, it will neither give strength to his body nor peace unto his mind. Woe-worn and wretched he will pass his days, without joy in his life, without consolation in his death, and with a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation in the world to come. From the supply of those temporal wants which are necessary to our *being* in this vale of tears, our Saviour, therefore, passes forward immediately to the consideration of those spiritual wants, which are essential to our *well-being* in every state. "Forgive us our trespasses" is the natural language which he dictates to every sinner upon earth; because, without the forgiveness of Heaven, all other petitions, even if granted, will be of little avail

for the purposes of inward and permanent tranquillity.

In thus petitioning the Almighty for the forgiveness of our sins, we are taught to acknowledge the natural inefficacy of our own repentance, and to depend upon God's mercy alone for that inheritance of joy and glory which has been promised, through grace, to the redeemed of the Lord. Still, however, we are not permitted to expect or even to pray for an unconditional pardon at the hands of God. Upon his own meritorious Cross and Passion, our Saviour is silent, because he had not yet poured out his soul unto death, or been offered for the transgressions of the world; and had he spoken of that great mystery of godliness to his followers, in their present state of darkness and prejudice, they would neither have been able to receive nor understand his saying. But with regard to that return of gratitude which is required from man, as a meet and fitting frame of mind for the reception of so great and wonderful a work as his salvation from the consequences of sin, our Lord is particularly solemn and distinct. He calls upon us in the most unequivocal manner to keep in our constant remembrance the filial and fraternal relation in which we stand to God and to each other, and to nourish with peculiar care those feelings of ten-

derness which are inspired by the consciousness of so near a connexion. He tells us, that if we will not bear with the little faults and errors of our brethren, in the casual and limited intercourse of this transitory life, we ought not even to dare to pray for, much less to depend upon, the forgiveness of those many and grievous offences, with which, as wayward sons, we are continually provoking the goodness and forbearance of our heavenly Father. Father, "forgive us our trespasses, *as we* forgive them that trespass against us," are the words of Jesus, and the spirit of them is plain, and intelligible; and it is this: The mercy we to others show, that mercy show to us, in the same proportion, with the same readiness, and to the same extent. It were needless to press any further upon your attention the meaning of what must be obvious to the understandings of all. The nature and the object of the petition are clear; but if you wish to be more fully instructed in the manner in which the principle upon which it proceeds will be ultimately applied to the pardon of mankind, you have only to turn to the book of God, and there read the parable which has been written for the express purpose of its illustration. Look upon the fate of the "Unforgiving servant," and whilst you tremble at the contemplation of his irremediable sufferings, go, and learn to be wise and merciful yourselves—to forgive, that so you

may be forgiven. Remember, also, that whenever you utter this petition in an unforgiving frame of mind, and with a desire of vengeance in your hearts, for the offences which have been committed against you by others, you are in reality praying for a more certain and heavier judgment upon your own sins. In all such instances, we are in fact but asking of God, that he will *not* forgive us our trespasses, as we do *not* forgive those that trespass against us. A consideration more awful than this, it would be impossible to present to the human imagination, and if the heart be not wrought upon by the terrors it inspires, to quench its hatred and forget its wrath, it would be in vain to hope that any other motive could breathe the spirit of mildness and of mercy into man.

“Blessed is the man whose unrighteousness is forgiven and whose sin is covered.” But then, unworthy also is the man to be made a partaker of that blessing, who does not endeavour to shew forth both the sincerity of his gratitude and his desire for holiness, by laying hold of every means to avoid the future practice, as well as escape the future punishment of his transgressions. Nay more. Not only is the man, who is careless to keep himself unspotted from the world, unworthy to receive the forgiveness of a righteous God, but

he is also incapable of retaining it. For, when we speak, at any time, of the forgiveness of sin, we include only the past transactions of a guilty life. For the good or evil of the remainder of our days we are still accountable; so that it is as necessary to pray that we may be rescued from the dominion, as that we may be freed from the damnation of sin. Now the only way by which it is possible for fallen man to preserve himself in the purity of an untainted innocence, is, either by never being led into temptation at all, or by never yielding to the force of those temptations into which he falls. Therefore, to the prayer to God for the conditional forgiveness of our past sins, is added, lastly, as a preservative against future guilt, "and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

We know, O Lord, that thou thyself temptest no man with evil, and sufferest no man to be tempted at any time above his strength, and wouldest not willingly that any man should be tempted to evil at all. But we know also, that because our offences are so manifold and great, we are not worthy to be guarded by thy power from the worst temptations that may befall. We are conscious that we have deserved, as a just judgment upon our crimes and follies, to be placed, hereafter, in situations and scenes the

most dangerous to virtue, and to be exposed, without defence, to the lusts of the flesh, the snares of the world, and the wiles of the devil. Nevertheless, in order to prove, by our words, the sincerity of our repentance, our dependance upon thee, and our earnest desire to be created in holiness anew, we would most humbly beseech thee, of thy goodness, O Lord, so entirely, even in this world, to take away the evil consequences of our transgressions, as neither to lead, nor permit us to be led, into any temptation, as a punishment for their guilt and a demonstration of thy wrath. Or should it prove inconsistent with the purposes of thy holy Providence, and the end of our creation in a state of trial, to free us altogether from this curse of our nature; still we would venture, with all humility, to ask, that whenever thou art pleased either to tempt or permit us to be tempted, thou wouldest, at the same time, be pleased to "deliver us from evil." Save us, we implore thee, from evil of every kind; from every evil passion and every evil thought; from every evil word and every evil work; from every evil being and every evil thing; from the wickedness of man, the malice of the devil, and the danger and deceitfulness of our own corruption. Thus, and thus only, when supported by the strength of thy holy arm, can we hope to triumph over the adversaries of the soul.

To whom should a subject flee for aid, but to his lawful and hereditary sovereign? On whom can a weak and helpless creature rely, but upon a Being who has power at all times to guard and preserve him? Or what can be more natural than for him who bows down as an humble suppliant for another's favour, to ascribe the glory to him, whom he deems worthy to receive, and ready to hear, and able to answer, his prayers? Under all these characters, and on all these accounts is it, that our Saviour hath taught us to offer up our devotions to thee, O Father, and in obedience to his words we do now profess that these are the reasons by which we are influenced, saying, "*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.*"

Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art King, be the people never so impatient. Thou art exalted a head above all, and sittest, as a Ruler, between the Cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet. Thou reignest over all, and therefore, as humble dwellers in that universe which is thy dominion, we feel it our duty to bring our petitions before thee. We feel it our interest too, because thine also is the greatness and the victory, and the majesty. Riches and honour and blessing, and health and sickness, and strength and weakness, and joy and sorrow, and

good and evil come of thee. In thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is, to make great or to cause a fall, to raise us up or to cast us down, to bless or to curse, to kill or to make alive, to save or to destroy, to give or to take away. In wisdom, therefore, as well as in duty, we appear as suppliants before thy heavenly throne, and glorify thee, by acknowledging, in meekness and in truth, that the glory of all we have, and the honour of all we do, and the praise of all we either speak or think, are thine, and thine *for ever*. Earthly monarchs and protectors shall all wax old as doth a garment, and weakness come with their years, and they shall go down to the grave, and their place and power be remembered no more. But thy years endure throughout all generations, and thy strength shall never fail. The elements shall melt with fervent heat. The heavens and the earth shall pass away, but thou, and thy dominion, and thy might, and thy mercy, shall still remain; and so long as there is life in any suffering and thinking creature, to feel and express its wants, so long shall there be power in thee to hear and relieve them. And therefore we say, "Amen and Amen." Verily so would we have it, is our wish, and verily so do thou let it be, is our prayer.

Such is the model which has been left us by

our blessed Saviour, for our use and imitation in the supplications we offer up to God, and it is no less than five times repeated during the course of the Morning Service on every Sabbath. To this frequent recurrence of the same words, in the brief devotions of an hour, we may perhaps be inclined to object, as many have done before, that it is liable to the censure of a vain and useless repetition. But, whatever might be the force of this remark upon other occasions, in the present instance it can have little weight, because the circumstance may be accounted for without any imputation upon the judgment of those who compiled our Liturgy. The Communion, the Litany, and the ordinary Morning Prayers, which the custom of the Church has now combined into a single service, were originally intended to be distinct from each other, and performed at different periods of the day. With the greatest propriety, therefore, has the Lord's Prayer demanded and received an admission into each; because no service, however short, or however admirably framed could be considered as otherwise than defective, in which we did not attempt to sanctify and correct the errors of a human composition, by the introduction of that faultless prayer, which the Author of our religion has prescribed as the model for our devotions, and which tacitly implies, though it does not positively express, our desire

for every thing which man can wish, or ought to ask.

But waving this usual defence, we would seriously ask, under what circumstances this holy prayer of our Lord can ever be said to be too frequently repeated? Our ignorance in asking is palpable and confessed; and it is much to be feared, that from errors both in the manner and the matter of our devotions, they might sometimes almost degenerate into sinfulness. What then can be more wise, or just, or holy, than at short and frequent intervals to recall to our minds, both for what, and in what manner, we ought to pray, by the insertion of the Lord's prayer, whose perfection will cover every evil, and whose fulness will supply every defect. Superior that prayer is in excellence, comprehensive in brevity, holy in substance, solemn in manner, and simple in expression. But it were an idle task to attempt to give dignity, by human praise, to that which proceeded from the Lord of all. It was he, who spake as never man spake—it was Jesus the wise, the holy and the just, who gave this prayer for the use and imitation of his disciples; and if we are not moved to adore and to adopt it, by the reverence and gratitude we feel for the Speaker, it were in vain to endeavour to influence the heart or the understanding by the weak applauses of a creature's

tongue. Remember, therefore, the authority of him who commanded us thus to pray, and remember, also, in obedience to his commandment, both when and wherever ye pray, to say, “Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name ; Thy kingdom come ; Thy Will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven ; Give us this day our daily bread ; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever *Amen.*”

DISCOURSE XIX.

MATT. chap. xxii. ver. 11.

“When the King came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment.”

THE parable of the Marriage Supper, as it is related to us in the Gospel of St. Matthew, consists of two separate parts, having a distinct reference, but a common connection; a distinct reference as to the subjects, and a connection common as to the object they have in view.

The first of these two portions of the parable records the invitation of those whom the King had originally intended to be his guests; and who, though at first they seem to have expressed no disinclination to accept the honour, yet, when actually called upon to fulfil their promise, refused, upon various but frivolous pretences, to obey the call; and proceeding still farther in their folly, did add wickedness to contempt, and destroy the ser-

vants who bore the message from their Master. "A certain King made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding, and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my feast; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandize. And the remnant took his servants and entreated them despitefully and slew them." Such was their conduct; and their punishment was made as awful as their crime deserved. "The King was wroth when he heard thereof, and he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city." His offended majesty was kindled into vengeance, and the offenders themselves were slain and their habitation left desolate.

It is here that the instructive lesson conveyed in the first portion of the parable ends; but it is only to make way for one still more impressive on the second, which recounts the substitution of other guests in the room of those who had thus proved themselves unworthy of the offer, and the conduct which the King observed towards these new guests when they had waited upon him. For his care and kindness would not that the good

things which he had prepared should be lost and wasted. He therefore “sent forth his servants to gather together as many as they should find, both good and bad ; and the table was furnished and filled with guests. But when the King came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding-garment. And he was speechless. Then said the King to his servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.”

To the conduct of this King our Saviour compares the conduct which has been and will be pursued by the Ruler of the kingdom of Heaven ; both the manner in which the Almighty hath hitherto acted in the dispensations of his grace on earth, and the principles upon which he will hereafter act in the distribution of glory to mankind in Heaven. The proceedings of the Ruler of “ the kingdom of Heaven,” with regard to that kingdom, both as it comprehends the kingdom of grace here and the kingdom of glory hereafter, are like unto those of “ a certain King who made a marriage,” and in honour of the marriage, a marriage feast, “ for his son.”

With this view of the leading object and primary intention of the parable, it will be easy to perceive the propriety of the comparison, to trace the resemblance even in its minutest points, and explain every particular circumstance by which it is adorned and amplified.

The marriage itself, of course, represents the marriage of the Lamb of God, the Son of the everlasting King, “when his wife shall have made herself ready.”* It figures out that full and final union of Christ and his Church, in the last and great day of the Lord, when “having sanctified and cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, he shall present it unto himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish,”† “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”‡ This is a great mystery; but I speak after the manner of the Apostles; and if we are justified by their authority in considering the marriage of the King’s Son, in the parable, as signifying unto us that mystical union betwixt Christ and his Church, which God hath ordained to be consummated at the final consummation of all things, we may venture also upon the same authority to regard the wedding *Supper* as a lively figure of that spiritual supper, “those good things which God hath

* Rev. xix. 7. † Ephes. v. 26. ‡ Rev. xxi. 2.

prepared for them that love him," * that continual feast of holiness, and happiness, and rest, which, after the judgment shall have been passed upon all men, the saints, as the friends of the bridegroom, shall begin to enjoy, and enjoy for ever at his table—not like the common nuptial festivities of the Jews, consisting of mere sensual enjoyments, and lasting only for a few passing days, but composed of those heavenly joys which neither corrupt nor pall upon the taste, and enduring for days without number and ages without end. "Blessed therefore indeed are they who are called to this Marriage Supper of the Lamb," † and unwisely, as well as wickedly, did they act, who, being called once and again, either persecuted and murdered the messengers of their King, or made light of the call, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandize.

Who those foolish and frivolous people were that disregarded the feast and abused the messengers of their King, we shall have but little difficulty in understanding, if we recall to mind the order and the method in which the glad tidings of salvation have been proposed to mankind. The people of Israel were the chosen seed. The Jews were those whom the Lord originally intended to be his guests, and who had therefore from the

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

† Rev. xix. 8.

beginning been bidden to the table of their Lord, for the sake and as the children of Abraham, their father after the flesh. The Jews, therefore, are to be considered as those whom our Lord describes as before “bidden to the wedding,” and whom the King first of all “sent forth his servants,” the Prophets, the Baptist, and perhaps the blessed Jesus himself, to call again. Through the mouth of these holy messengers he expressed his anxiety to receive them, and renewed in their hearts the remembrance of their engagement. “But they would not come.” Again, when he had thoroughly prepared the feast, when the Lamb of God, the spiritual food of the saints, has been slain as the passover of the world, and all things were now set in order for the celebration of the marriage of his Son with the Church, and nought was wanting but the friends of the bridegroom to partake of the feast, “he sent forth yet *other* servants,” to endeavour to bring them to a sense of their interest and their duty. When every thing was ready for their reception as guests, his mercy, even after the death of Christ and their first refusal of his offer, endued the Apostles and Evangelists with authority once more to beseech them by the preaching of Christ crucified, to come to the marriage. But still they were either careless or negligent, and upon the vainest excuses went other ways, or else, being exasperated

by the repetition of an offer they despised, evil-entreated and slew the ministers of the Most High. The King of the Kingdom therefore sent forth the armies of his vengeance, and through the power of Rome laid the city of Jerusalem even with the ground, and slaughtered her children within her.

What might have been the event, and what the fate of the idolatrous nations of the earth, had the whole people of Israel submitted themselves as one man to the righteousness of the Gospel, and listened to the ministers, and received the religion and the law of Christ, the parable has left unrevealed, because unnecessary to be known. But one thing it has told us, for which we should ever be thankful, and that is, that disappointed in his chosen guests, God turned with the offer of his good things to others. Through their fall the way of salvation has been made known unto the Gentiles, and blindness is happened unto Israel in part, and the great day of the Marriage and Marriage-Supper put off until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled, and the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. It was necessary that the word should first have been spoken to Judah, but seeing that they to whom pertained the call, and the election, and the glory, and the covenants, and the promises, rejected the counsel of God, and

judged themselves unworthy to sit down at his table in the kingdom of Heaven, the Apostles were directed, for the future, to bid to the wedding “both good and bad,”—to press the invitation to lay hold on everlasting life, not only upon the Jews, but upon the Gentiles also. “And the wedding was furnished with guests.” The Church was filled with disciples who thus became privileged to be present at her mystical union with her Lord, and to eat of the Lord’s supper and drink wine with him in his kingdom of Heaven.

Having thus carried us through the history of the order in which the call to salvation has been successively communicated to the different nations of the earth, the parable next transports us to the hour and solemnities of the feast itself—to the last awful day of judgment, when “the King shall come in to see the guests,” when God himself shall scrutinize the heart, and examine who are, and who are not duly qualified to partake of that heavenly feast, of which they that do partake, shall neither hunger nor thirst any more. And woe be unto them whose unseemliness is not in that day covered by the graceful adorning of a wedding-garment; for they shall be cast into that gloominess of mind and that thick darkness of the soul, which weigheth down all those that are taken away from the presence of God in glory.

Such is the interpretation of the whole parable. The King is God. The marriage is the mystical union of the Church with Christ, the Son of God. The invitation to the marriage is the invitation to lay hold on everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Saviour, which is given to all to whom, from time to time the oracles of God have been committed and the covenants made known. Those who, having a peculiar call, were afterwards twice bidden, and twice refused to obey the bidding, are the majority of the Jews, who being called in Abraham, successively rejected the testimony of the Prophets, of Jesus, and of the Apostles of Jesus. Whilst “the good and the bad” who were gathered from the highways and hedges, are those who, whether Jews or Gentiles, have been collected from every region of the earth, and have embraced the name and religion of Jesus. Finally, the Marriage-supper represents those good things which God hath prepared for the saints when Christ shall be united to his Church, and he and his members become for ever one; and the Wedding-garment, is that clothing of the inward man, without which we shall not be counted worthy to partake of the feast. The former portion of the parable applies therefore to the Israelites alone; the latter to the people of God in general. The former relates to the rejection of Christianity by the Jews, and their ruin

as a nation ; the latter to the rejection of those Christians from the eternal happiness of Heaven, who shall not at the day of judgment be found meet partakers of the kingdom of God.

I have dwelt thus long upon the simple interpretation of the parable itself, because I have never yet seen it sufficiently illustrated, and because I am sure that we cannot explain any portion of Scripture truly, without giving birth to reflections which must be profitable to the soul. But it is with the last circumstance I have mentioned ; it is with the awful sentence which flowed from the want of a wedding-garment, that, as individuals, we are more nearly concerned. The unwillingness of those, who were bidden, to come, and the frivolous excuses they pretended, may certainly be generally and well applied to the consciences of all mankind. But the wedding-garment is the one thing needful, and above all things we are interested to inquire whether we ourselves are in the possession of it or no. Brethren in the Lord, we are all Christians in name, and have all been baptised into the faith of the Gospel, and numbered in the fold of the good Shepherd ; and surely we all wish to live and die guided and guarded by that good Shepherd here, and received and cherished by him hereafter. But Oh, the melancholy difference to the soul, if after

having soothed ourselves with the delusion of a holy hope, and flattered our consciences with the godliness of a name, we should any of us find in the end and in eternity that we are not in reality what we thought ourselves to be ! Whither shall we go for refuge or for consolation, if, after having been united to the company of Jesus upon earth, we should be separated from them for ever in heaven, because destitute of the wedding-garment, and therefore naked, and therefore unseemly before God ?

What, then, is this wedding-garment ? Men have disputed about this, as in their perverseness they will dispute about any thing. The actual and personal righteousness of Christians—all their good works, which are the genuine evidences of a truly Christian faith—the inward holiness and sincerity of men—the habits of the mind—the virtues of a holy life—the true evangelical temper and disposition of soul—all these and a variety of similar explanations have been suggested, though founded only, as it would seem, upon the double application of the term *habit*, both in its natural sense to the body, and in a metaphorical sense to the mind. But if with unprejudiced understandings we examine into the meaning of the phrase, and endeavour to ascertain its intention by the comparison of Scripture

with Scripture, we shall have little difficulty in forming such a conception of its nature, as to save our own souls from death. For the wedding-garment of the Jews was usually *white*; and what says the Apostle in the record of his visions? He says that “it was granted unto the Church, when she made herself ready for her marriage with the Lamb, that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and *white*, and that the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.”* The righteousness of the saints is, therefore, doubtless that garment to which the parable refers. But it is not that righteousness which springs from the moral virtues of any saint, however ‘personally great or good he may be in the sight of men. It is rather that righteousness which we acquire by being justified and counted righteous before God through Christ. For in his own works alone hath no man whereof to boast before his Maker, or to be justified in Heaven. We are here in the temple of the Lord as his servants, and, as well becomes such unprofitable servants, we have every one of us been taught to confess in the service of the day, that we are “miserable sinners,” that we have “erred and strayed” from God’s holy ways, and offended against his holy laws, and that

* Rev. xix. 7 and 8. From the mention of the *Marriage-Supper* in the following verse, the passage would seem almost to have a direct reference to this parable.

“there is no health in us.” How then can these “rags of righteousness” (as the Prophet speaks in the strength and beauty of his metaphor),* this tattered and imperfect garment of mortal godliness, be ever formed into a robe of righteousness so clean and white in purity, as to be counted faultless in the eye of him, who seeth not as man seeth? Oh no, it is by raiment of a more goodly texture than our own so frail and frequently failing goodness, that we must seek to hide the defects and diseases and deformities of our moral nature. Turn we then to the second Epistle to the Corinthians, and there let us read for our instruction the doctrine of the Apostle,† that we are made the righteousness of God, such righteousness as is approved of God, in him whom God made to be sin for us. In one word, Christ is made of God unto us a raiment of righteousness, a beauteous raiment to clothe our nakedness and hide our blemishes. For, verily, except the robe of his unsullied purity be thrown over our infirmities, we shall be seen and marked by every creature in Heaven as unclean things, and not be reckoned worthy to sit down in the presence of the holy and eternal King, and in the company of his Ministers, the Angels, and the Spirits of those just men, who have been “made perfect” like ourselves, by the merits of

* Isaiah, lxiv. 6.

† 2 Cor. v. 21.

their Redeemer. The Wedding-garment is, therefore, that righteousness of the Saints “which is of faith,” that imputed righteousness of Christ which is applied to us and to our salvation, by faith.

When the guest who had intruded himself unadorned into the feast, was questioned by the King, and asked, “Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a Wedding-garment,” we read, that “he was speechless,” and had no word of apology to utter for an appearance so unbecoming both the time and place. Yet, if we consider that he was one of those whom the parable represents as having been promiscuously gathered from the highways and hedges, that he was called without warning, and probably also came without delay, we may perhaps vainly imagine that he might have had something, and something substantial, too, to have urged in his excuse, and that his speechlessness arose only from confusion or from ignorance. We may falsely think, perhaps, that he might have related with force, both the condition in which he was found, and the place whence he was called; that he might have told of his poverty, his hunger, and his wretchedness—his wretchedness, which made him inattentive to the ceremonies of life, his hunger, which made him crave for food, and his poverty, which made him unable to buy the necessary adornings for a feast.

But though unable to buy, he need not surely, in this instance at least, have been ashamed to beg, and his own silence, as well as the liberality of the King and the custom of the country* persuade us, that if he had truly and humbly represented his wants, that garment would have been given to him as a gift, which he had neither the power to purchase nor could claim as a due.

Speechless then, and speechless from the same cause, shall we be, if ever we appear in the courts of Heaven without that righteousness of the saints which springeth of faith and of Christ. It is true that, like this other speechless guest, we have been invited to the spiritual table of the Lord without warning, and called without our consent from very infancy. We are spiritually poor, too, and hungry, naked, and helpless, and distressed. For what can be a more wretched thing than man is?† Born to misery as the sparks fly upwards, and the servant of sin by “the fault and corruption of his nature.” But what of all this? There is a Saviour to hide our every fault, and a God to pray to in every need. There is a Saviour whose arm will stretch forth the hem of his holy garment to con-

* It was and is still customary in the East for the master of the feast to furnish the guest with a garment.

† See the powerful description of man’s physical and moral wretchedness, in the Homily upon “the Misery of Man.”

ceal our failings, and to cover from wrath, with his righteousness as with a cloak, the iniquities of all who believe and repent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. And there is a God to pray to, who would not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance and faith, and through faith and repentance to everlasting life : a God he is also, who will ever give power to those who desire in earnestness and sincerity to perform what he has commanded, and to avoid what he has forbidden. Think then with yourselves, my Brethren, what answer ye shall be able to render unto God, if any of you should be questioned, like the guest in the parable, concerning your want of a wedding-garment. Is it for lack of faith that you are without it, or for lack of repentance, or for a failure in accomplishing those works of grace that belong unto repentance ? Then hath it been justly withheld from your possession. For though the righteousness of Christ be a garment which must be *given* to every man to put on, and with which we cannot clothe ourselves withal, yet still it is a gift which will always be given to those who are endued with the requisite qualities and conditions ; and those qualities and conditions will always be granted, according to the good pleasure of God's wisdom, to such as seek for them in humility, in sincerity, in the sacraments, and in prayer. Is it then for lack of ever having turned

unto God in prayer, or for want of having participated in the rites of his revealed religion, that ye are in this nakedness and necessity? Then are ye guilty indeed; for I cannot doubt but that at some period or other of his life, there is given to every man a desire and a power to pray for spiritual blessings, and the means of attending upon those sacred ordinances which have been so solemnly appointed for the communication of grace. Is it then that you have neglected, in their proper season, to embrace and improve those golden opportunities? Speechless ye may be, but innocent you cannot. Nay, I should rather say, that speechless ye must be from the consciousness of a sinful neglect and the certainty of a merited punishment.

There was but one, of whom our Saviour speaks as without a wedding-garment amidst all the assembled multitudes who would have partaken of the feast. "When the King came in to see the guests, he saw there a man," a single individual, "who had not on a wedding-garment." We hear of no more than this one, and you may therefore think that there is but little reason for such awful warnings upon the subject, to the generality of mankind. But I tell you, that this one was selected by our Lord rather as a terror to others, than as any proof of the fewness of those

who shall be cast out: and I establish my saying by the words of that Lord himself. Pass on but to the verse which immediately succeeds the condemnation of this unseemly guest, and you will find it there written, “that many are called, but few chosen.” Awful words are these. Many indeed are called into the covenant of grace. This whole land hath been called. The hundreds around me have been every one of them called—frequently and repeatedly called—by the reiterated, though feeble, voice of their ministers, by the continual hearing of God’s word, and the recurring worship of the Almighty. Say then, ye called, are you of the chosen? Say, for you alone can answer it, do you in your hearts *think* you are of the chosen? Upon the fate of others I cannot, I dare not, form an opinion or express a thought. I would only commend the subject of your eternal hopes and fears to the seriousness of your daily meditations, and leave you to stand or fall to your Master, who is above all and in you all. Yet I cannot but perceive, in the obscurity which has been permitted to rest upon this, as well as upon other things, the mercy as well as the justice of God; and whilst I tremble to remember that there are *few* that be saved, I bless the Lord for his goodness, because, in compassion to human infirmity he has withheld from us the dreadful knowledge of *how* few they be. Warned, there-

fore, by what I do, and comforted by what I do not, know, concerning the number of those who shall be chosen, I feel strengthened in spirit to pray, and to beseech every one of you to join me in prayer, for a blessing upon us all in our several capacities, that we may make our calling and election sure, and being clothed with the robe of the righteousness of Christ, may be counted worthy partakers of the supper of the Lord both here and in Heaven.

DISCOURSE XX.

2 COR. chap. v. ver. 10.

“ We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

OF all truths it is the most awful; of all truths it is the most certain; of all truths it is the most important; and of all truths it is the most frequently and solemnly inculcated by the ministers of the Gospel, that “ God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained:”* and the conclusion which they uniformly and justly draw from the knowledge and fearfulness of this truth, is the necessity which it lays upon “ all men every where to repent.”† To hear and to be influenced by the voice of warning upon such a subject might seem but to be the dictate of common sense. The consideration, however, of the day of judgment has failed in producing those beneficial effects upon the moral and religious conduct of mankind, which

* Acts xvii. 31.

† Acts xvii. 30.

might have been expected from a full assurance of the dreadful trial, and has failed from various causes; but principally, I think, it has failed, either from a want of adequate, correct, comprehensive, and connected ideas of the nature and circumstances of the Great Assize—or from a want of due meditation upon its consequences—or from a want of proper information upon the alarming and accurate manner in which we shall be called upon to give an account of our lives, whether they be good or evil. The day of judgment is, in fact, too often and too lightly talked of, to be much or deeply reflected upon by man. We become too familiarly and habitually acquainted with the name, to be duly affected with the thing itself, and thus we go on from day to day, without any thing more than some confused, and perhaps inconsistent notions, of that which is to determine our unalterable state.

To cure or to prevent an error so extensive and dangerous in its prevalence, I would now endeavour to draw, from the scattered intimations of Scripture, a feeble outline of the last impressive scene. I would lay before you in all its fulness, the examination which will there be entered upon into each man's deeds; and impress upon you the everlasting joy or terror of that sentence which will then be pronounced upon your bodies and

your souls. I would write the history of the day of judgment with the hand indeed of a man, but, as much as possible, in the words of God; trusting that if once its image were engraven upon your hearts, its name and its remembrance would ever afterwards be accompanied with something more than a transitory feeling of reverence and awe.

As it was in the beginning, so shall it be in the end of the world. In the beginning God said, "Let the earth be," and the earth was. In the end God shall say, "Let the earth be not," and the earth shall not be. At that word the fabric of the world shall dissolve and flee away, and all the holy host of Heaven begin the mighty business of preparation for that last and Great Assize, which in justice will bring to judgment, and in righteousness will determine the immutable, the eternal doom of all moral creatures; of all us men who are capable of thinking and of acting, but more especially of all us Christians, who have been taught by the wisdom of the Gospel to distinguish between right and wrong, and enabled by the power of the Spirit to perform our duty.

Now let us in imagination transport ourselves to that solemn scene. Behold, then, the day is at hand, the Deity hath proclaimed the end of the world, and the throne is set in Heaven, and he

that sitteth thereupon as the universal Judge is one like unto the Son of Man, clad in robes “dipped and dyed in the blood of salvation,”* “girt about his loins with the golden girdle” of purity, “his hair white as snow,” with reverence, “his eyes as a flame of fire” in dignity, “his voice as the sound of many waters” in power, and his whole countenance beaming in beauty, like the sun when he shineth in his strength.† Such is he whom God hath ordained to be the Judge of all, and to sit upon the throne of glory to condemn or to save from punishment those that shall appear before the presence of his holiness and might. It is he “that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of death and of hell.”‡ It is Jesus the Son of Mary, Christ the Son of God. Salvation belongeth unto him, yea and judgment also, and myriads of spiritual beings stand round about his throne, anxious to receive and ready to execute the precepts of his will. Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, are gathered together, winged for flight to the remotest regions of space, and willing to bear the unresisted and irresistible decrees of their beloved and Almighty Lord. || But amidst all the various occupations of those heavenly beings, there is none

* Rev. xix. 13.

† See Rev. i. 13—16. and xix. 12.

‡ Rev. i. 18.

|| Rev. v. 11.

which is to us more interesting than that of bringing forth the books of life and of death, in whose dreadful pages they have been recording, as they passed, the thoughts and actions of men both small and great, rich and poor, bond and free, in all nations, and kindreds, and people. But now it is finished, their labour is at an end. they have laid aside their pens, and stand prepared to open and to read the things which have been written therein, whether they be good or whether they be bad ; “ and all flesh shall be judged out of the things which are written in those books, according to their works, and whosoever shall not be found written in the book of life, shall be cast into the lake of fire.” *

Such is the scene which we may suppose to precede the judgment of the earth ; such are the pomp and solemnity of circumstance which may be presumed to accompany its acts, and assuredly there is none other which can so well or greatly deserve the amazing grandeur of those mighty preparations. For what scene can occur to us more terrible in its importance, than that which is to decide the destiny of the world and all its people ? Or who more just, or merciful, or worthy to receive the honour of uttering the decree, than he who was slain for that world, the

* Rev. xx. 12 and 15.

Lamb who redeemed us to God by his blood, and hath made us unto our God, kings and priests for ever and ever.*

The sons of men are they that are to be thus awfully judged, whether they be the living or the dead—whether, with us, they still move on in the round of daily duties and of daily existence, or whether they have long since worn out their strength, and sleep in the womb of their mother; for dust they were and unto dust they have returned. In the church-yard around us, in the graves beneath our feet, they rest in the mouldering oblivion of death, and so shall rest until the latter day. Then shall the Archangel advance before the throne, and lifting up the golden trumpet to his mouth, shall sound a last, long, piercing blast, which reaching from the one end of Heaven to the other, shall be heard in the very deepest chambers of the grave. At the sound of that fearful trump, “the sea shall give up the dead that are in it, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead that are in them.”† “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a mighty shout,”‡ and call upon every creature in the deep, and upon the earth, and under the earth; and every creature shall hear and obey the call, and come forth to be judged according to their works,

* Rev. v. 9, 10. † Rev. xx. 13. ‡ 1 Thes. iv. 16.

The bodies of those who perished in the days of Noah in one universal flood of ruin, shall revive; the beings that have yielded up the ghost in the mountains, and in the waters, and in the wilderness, shall once more be animated with the quickening influence of the spirit of motion; the atoms which are scattered upon the face of the earth shall again be gathered into human forms; the dry bones of those who are buried shall again be moistened with the dew of life, and shall come together, "bone to his bone, and sinews shall be laid upon them, and flesh shall be brought upon them, and breath shall be put into them, and they shall live,"* and live for ever; and there shall be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust. For the dead shall be raised in incorruption, and we shall be changed. "But behold," as says the Apostle St. Paul, "I shew you a mystery." We shall not all thus sleep the long, deep sleep of death, and then be re-animated and raised again. All men shall not yield to mortality and see corruption; but those inhabitants of the earth who live at the time of the general judgment shall either not taste of death at all, or at least not feel its bitterness, but passing instantaneously from a mortal and a corruptible to an immortal and incorruptible state, shall scarce be able to say whether they have died

* Ezek. xxxvii. 6—9.

or no. “They which are alive,” saith St. Paul,* “and remain” on the earth when the Lord shall descend from Heaven, shall not return unto the dust from whence they sprung, but “shall be caught up into the clouds to meet” their Judge. Their mortal shall put on immortality, their corruptible shall put on incorruption, in the twinkling of an eye, and in a moment they shall be changed and receive the things done in the body.† According to that they have done, so shall their sentence be, whether it be good or bad. They that have done good shall inherit everlasting life; but they that have done evil shall go away into everlasting shame and contempt. They that have loved righteousness shall be blessed with the blessing which God hath prepared for them that love him, joy such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. Theirs shall be pleasure without ceasing, and joy for evermore. But the greedy workers of unrighteousness and iniquity shall be cursed with everlasting destruction from the presence of God’s glory, bound down with chains and darkness, with the worm that dieth not, and the fire that cannot be quenched. There shall be weeping for sorrow, and gnashing of teeth for despair. Wherefore let them that be holy comfort each other, and build up their mutual faith and holiness in the prospect

* 1 Thes. iv. 17.

† 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

of this eternal reward of glory, and let those that be yet in their sins, considering God's horrible wrath, and their own most dreadful danger, take heed unto themselves before the hour of their salvation be past.

I have now endeavoured to lay before you, though very imperfectly indeed, a representation of the nature of the varied events and proceedings of that interesting day which will be unto us all either the most sorrowful or the most joyful that we have ever known. In that day God Almighty will decree the end of all things and the judgment of all men. God's holy Host will set the throne, and God's holy Son ascend the throne. Ministering Spirits will throng round about him on his right hand and on his left, and there will be read out of the books of life and of death the things which have been faithfully recorded, the doings and the misdoings of men. To hear the contents of those pages read, all beings will be summoned from the grave, and as they hear, so pass away, to receive their appointed portion in heaven or in hell, amidst angels or devils for ever. I have pictured these things, my brethren, as if they were already upon us. I have talked of the great day as if it were already here, and as if we were even now (as indeed we are) in the presence of our Almighty Judge; and I have thus

brought them near unto our doors, because I would that my discourse should be an effectual and not an empty sound, and because I would, if it were possible, engage your serious attention, and produce some godly impression upon your hearts. One observation further it is yet necessary to make before I proceed. It is impossible for any one to say whether the accounts which we read in the visions of the Prophets and Apostles relative to the interior solemnities and chambers of Heaven, were intended by them as the accurate descriptions of real things, or are the mere efforts of imagination labouring to body forth in similitudes, what the imperfection of common language wants power to express with simplicity. For my own part, I cannot but regard their delineations as the representations of circumstances and events, which will, in many parts at least, be found actually to take place at the Great Assize, and I have therefore spoken of them as realities throughout. In this opinion I may perhaps be wrong. But whether they are to be considered as realities or as imaginative pictures only, is to us a matter of very little consequence. Where the signs of things are so extremely awful, the things signified cannot be less so. The substance cannot be less terrible than the shadow of the judgment which we fear.

To exhort you to consider what manner of men we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness, would now seem to be the natural and simple conclusion of the whole ; but there is here one question which forces itself upon human curiosity, and irresistibly demands attention and an answer. The question is this : if God hath indeed appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, and if we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, what are the actions for which we shall then be called upon to give an account, and what is the balance in which those actions will be weighed ? To this the Apostle answers, that they are “ the things done in the body,” for which we shall receive our punishment or reward ; that it is for every thing to which we may have been conscious during our abode in this fleshly tabernacle of clay ; for every working of the mind as well as of the members of the man, that we shall be called to render an account strictly and fully, with impartiality and without reserve, according to that we have done in every station of life, from the throne to the cottage, and in every period of existence from the cradle to the grave. “ We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

1. Now of “the things done *in* the body,” the first and most natural idea we form is, that it relates to the things done *by* the body, by the fleshly members of the living man; to the words spoken and the acts committed in our sojourning upon earth; to the utterances of the tongue and the deeds of the hands. Lies, murders, adulteries, fornication, theft, blasphemy, fraud and oppression, wrong and robbery, evil-speaking and evil-acting, all fall within the catalogue of things done by the members of the body. No matter where they have been done or by whom; no matter when we have sinned, or against whom; no matter how carefully we have concealed our sins from the world, or how much they have been countenanced or discountenanced by those around us; no matter how studiously we have endeavoured to deceive our conscience, and forget remorse in the free and liberal enjoyment of the fruits of guilt; no matter whether we have erred in the waywardness of youth, the experience of manhood or the weakness of age; no matter whether we have been seduced by the fulness of prosperity, or driven into crime by the pressure of poverty; no matter what flattering unction we may lay unto our souls, without all controversy our evil is noted and known, written and will be remembered; yea, and without all controversy, it will be read and judged with a righteous judgment according to

the end we have had in view, the intention with which we have acted, and the ability with which we have been endued to resist temptation. To the hearts of most men the picture of their lives, when seen in this full broad glare of light, will be fearful indeed. The reason why so few are found to tremble at the approach of death or the contemplation of futurity is, because they either know not or remember not what they really are in the sight of God. We are here in the sight of our fellow-creatures only, and whilst sojourning upon the earth, we are governed only by men, and judged only by men, and so by habit we learn to fear and think only of men, and to regard their opinion of our characters as the real standard of our virtue. The sins which they do not punish, we do not abhor, and the crimes which they choose not to remember, we think ourselves at liberty to forget. But, God forbid that any one accustomed to attend the worship of the Lord in a Christian temple, should be permitted to depart from this life into the presence of his Maker, there to urge as an excuse for his erroneous opinion, that he had never been taught to think otherwise by those ministers to whom the care of his religious instruction had been committed. Know then, that it is neither this world, nor this world's law, which is either to guide us here or to judge us hereafter. Our vices may perhaps be so

decently veiled, that they shall hold forth no example of wickedness to others. The fraud we have committed may have been so carefully concealed, that even the injured individual himself shall neither have felt nor known the injury. Yet all things are naked and open unto him with whom we have to do, and he that in his concerns with man hath demanded more than his due, or taken advantage of the ignorance or simplicity of his neighbour, or done in any one single instance that which it was his duty not to do, shall one day give an account thereof before a tribunal where nothing is unknown and nothing will pass unrewarded. According to that we have done so shall we receive, whether it be good or bad ; but then the good or evil of our deeds will be determined, not by the customs of business, or the looser morals of those around, but by the Lord as our judge, and the Gospel as our law ; and some there be who there will find that all their shrewdness in worldly wisdom has been very foolishness, that all their gaiety has been but the mother of eternal sorrow, that the sensual joy of the body has ruined the spiritual blessedness of the soul, that they have gained or preserved the phantom of honour with the loss of Heaven, and gone to inherit the wrath of God with characters which pleased, because they conformed to the wickedness of a deceitful world.

2. The next interpretation to which we are led in explaining and enlarging upon the “things done in the body,” is, that the phrase refers to the things done by the soul whilst in the body, to the thoughts, the hopes, the wishes, and the affections, of the heart. Many a foolish and many a sinful imagination springs up in the mind, and is wilfully indulged and carefully cherished; yet, after all, perhaps, from the intervention of some accidental circumstance, or providential kindness, it passes away abortive, and so is forgotten. Many a wicked deed is planned but not executed, either for want of courage or for want of opportunity; and so we fancy, that because the lust hath brought forth no visible fruit here, it will bring forth no punishment of death hereafter. But in all this the soul has been busily and sinfully employed, although the hands may have been withheld from the fulfilment of its dictates; and the murder, or the theft, or the adultery, has already been committed in thought. There has been a work of the inward, though not of the outward man, a work “*in the body*,” though not *of* the body, and God, who knoweth the deepest secrets of the soul, will never silently dismiss into oblivion those wicked wishes and desires, by the indulgence of which the pollution of sin is so deeply contracted, that our Saviour expressly declares, that the evil desired is already done *in the heart*. I call your

attention thus seriously and solemnly to the regulation of the thoughts, because it is a duty whose nature and importance are so frequently and fatally mistaken. It is to the danger, rather than to the sinfulness of indulging unrighteous desires, that men in general direct their attention and care; and if the cherished imagination be checked before it become too strong for resistance, or before it has broken forth into some open crime, they presume that it partakes only of the nature of a temptation, and therefore, will never rise up in array against their souls in that day, in which God will render to every man only "according to his *works*." But know, O vain man, that God is the searcher and trier of the hearts, as well as of the doings of his creatures, and will bring every evil wish, as well as work, into judgment, because they are alike deeds "done in the body" of our mortality. The inevitable trials which flesh and blood is heir to, will, indeed, if resisted and restrained, turn only to our greater and eternal glory; but those scenes of ambition and of vanity, and of uncleanness, which have been wilfully called forth in our chambers or upon our bed; the malice, and envy, and wrath which have been nurtured in the bosom of silence and secrecy, are at once the parents of temptation and the children of guilt, endued with all the danger of the one, and liable to all the consequences of the other.

Every lust of the flesh, or of the eye, or of the pride of life, when admitted and unsubdued, is a violation, even in itself, and without any accompanying act of that perfect law of holiness, which would purify the affections as well as the body of man, and as a violation of that law, partakes, therefore, of the nature, and is subject to the punishment, of sin.

3. Again, in giving an account of the “things done in the body,” the inquiry must, of course, necessarily extend to a revelation of those things which ought to have been done, but which, from neglect, from infirmity, or from ungodliness, have *not* been done in the body. The inquisition will reach to the duties we have omitted, as well as to the crimes of which we have been guilty. For sin is the object of the proceedings of the great day, and “to him,” we read in the Scripture, that, “knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” So, then, we shall each of us receive our eternal recompense from the hand of God, not only as we have yielded to our severer temptations to do evil, but also as we have neglected or improved our opportunities and powers of becoming righteous; and those opportunities will always be found to be greater or less as we ourselves have been greater or less—those powers to be higher or lower, as we ourselves

have been higher or lower in the scale of society, from wealth, from station, from talent, or from knowledge. It is a very singular scene which the day of judgment will thus present before the understanding. Then, and then, for the last time, will men appear together under the characters which they have borne in this life, standing once for all in the same relations towards each other, and surrounded once more, and for a moment, with all the artificial distinctions of society. Kings with their crowns, and warriors with their swords, and rich men with their riches, and the noble with his birth, and the philosopher with his wisdom (but all with their sins), shall come forth from the equality of the grave, and for the single hour of judgment, be again separated from the common mass of mankind, and regarded as superior to the rest of their fellow-creatures. But as superior in what? Not as it is here, in the indulgence shewn to their errors, and the flattery poured upon their folly, and the number and greatness of their various privileges; but only in the extent of their influence, and the multitude and magnitude of their duties. In the life that now is, it is the splendor of the crown, and the victory of the sword, and the luxury of wealth, and the dominion of power, and the dignity of birth, and the name of wisdom more honourable, but as vain as them all, that move the envy and emulation of

man. But in the life and judgment that are to come, it is the *responsibility* of the crown, and the responsibility of war, and the responsibility of riches, and the responsibility of birth, of power, and of wisdom, that will alone engage the human thoughts ; and all transitory glories will be lost in the remembrance of that fearful reckoning which this responsibility entails. Strange, indeed, will then be the changes and fluctuations of state which will take place amongst those who, as the children of one common parent, should naturally also have been the heirs of one common blessedness. The diadem shall be snatched from the head of the oppressor, that it may encircle, with eternal brightness, the brow of the sufferer that in patience possessed his soul. The good things of the rich man shall go to delight that Lazarus whose necessities were neglected, and whose sores unhealed. He that did exalt himself above his fellows, and walk as a god in the pride of pageantry amongst the poor, shall be abased to the dust and clothed with inferiority ; whilst he that in the humility of subordination did bow down before the footstool of greatness, shall be exalted on high and robed with power. The bow of the mighty man, that guarded not the helpless, shall be broken, and the brightness of his unprofitable shield be sullied by the shadow of his idleness. The haughtiness of birth, that condescended not to

men of low estate, shall be bowed down, to make way for the beggar "without father, without mother, and without descent," and the many talents that were possessed but unused by ability, shall pass away from his languid hands to enrich the diligent improver of some single opportunity of good. So will it be with them that have much good to do and do it not; for many that are last shall be first, and many of the first shall be last. But let not him that is lowly think therefore that he shall escape in his obscurity. There is nothing either too great for the grasp or too minute for the eye of the Almighty; and when he maketh inquisition for sin, it will be for all sin and amongst all. There is a grace peculiar to every station, and a moral lesson prepared for the learning of every individual upon earth. Poverty is sent to one that she may be the mother of an entire and unreserved dependence upon God. Afflictions fall upon another, that they may breed patience in his soul; and disappointments come to a third that they may teach contentedness to the mind. Thy hand, therefore, if it hath not been lifted up in its poverty to the Lord of all, and thou, afflicted mourner, that hast not learnt patience in thy woes, and thou disappointed heart, that hast not gathered contentment from hopes deferred, know that ye shall all be visited with judgment for the virtues you have neglected to acquire. For one

single talent that is hid in useless inactivity, shall have no more chance of escaping the scrutiny of Heaven, than the unprofitableness of ten thousand. If thou hast failed to do good when it was in the power of thy hand to do it, thou shalt be punished for thy failure, with that measure of justice which is thy due, whether thou be the Lord of a kingdom, or but the father of a family ; single or married ; male or female ; master or servant ; child or man ; amongst the wise, or amongst the foolish ones of the earth ; the inhabitant of a palace or a cottage ; possessed of the widow's mite or the great man's millions. The scale of omitted duties, as well as of committed crimes will be framed for all in the same strictness and with the same impartiality.

Such are those evil deeds done in the body, for which we shall be called upon to give an account when we appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. They are the works of the hands, the words of the lips, and the thoughts of the heart. They are the duties we have omitted, and the crimes of which we have been guilty ; and to each man will be allotted, as his sinfulness may merit, his appropriate place amidst everlasting burnings.

But there may be many mansions in the house of wretchedness, as well as of bliss, and the gnawing

of the worm and the torment of the flame may vary in their pain, from that which has merely the power of interrupting cheerfulness and ease, up to that which so breaks the energy, and so overpowers the resistance of the sufferer, as to make the sad echo of one fearful and enduring shriek of agony the only sound that can be heard within the walls of his hell. How then will the degree of punishment be proportioned unto man? With what scale will it be measured, and distributed according to what law? It is an awful question, but it hath an easy answer. Truly with the measure with which we have measured unto others, it shall be meted unto us again, and we shall bear a burden of woe that is heavy or light, according to the law in which we have been educated, and the light under which we have lived. We contemplate the obstinacy of the Jew, and we pity him. We read of the permitted sensualities and unhallowed paradise of Mahomet, and turn away, lest we should be corrupted, from the impure pages of the Koran. We are told of the bloody and senseless rites of India and the East, and we bless the holiness of the religion into which we have been baptized. We hear of the horrors and vile degradation of savage life, and, wondering how human nature could ever sink so low, rejoice in the moral and intellectual eminence upon which we stand. But there cometh

a day—and how soon we know not—when we may chance to change this note of triumph into the voice of weeping and much lamentation, and be compelled to envy, through eternity, that darkness of the understanding which, in time, we so hated and despised. These misguided wanderers, indeed, do not the will of God, because, indeed, they do not know it; but we, when we are sinners, know it and do it not; and therefore it is, that, perhaps, many of them shall hereafter be less miserable than us. For what saith the Lord, and upon whom were the heaviest of his judgments pronounced? He said that “unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required,” and the deepest of his woes descended upon the faithlessness of Capernaum and the impenitence of Chorazin and Bethsaida; because they had seen so many of his mighty works, and heard so many of his gracious words, yet repented not at his preaching, neither were persuaded by his power. Therefore, says he, “it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and of Gomorrah in the day of Judgment, than for you;” and therefore say we, that, lighter shall be the suffering of Arabia’s wanderer, or India’s slave, than for them who under any clime, having heard and known of the truth and excellence of Christianity, have neither been careful to believe nor to do what it commands.

But if this is indeed to be the rule and measure of our judgment, who then, we may ask with trembling impatience, may stand when God appeareth, or who may abide the day of his coming? If God will be thus extreme to mark what is done amiss, no man will be able to lift up his head in hope, and is it not then a mockery to tell us, as we are told in the text, that we shall receive our reward "according to the things done in the body whether they be *good or bad*," knowing as we must all do, from the testimony of conscience, that we have done but little that is good, and that we have done very much that is evil? In the mouth of a mere human teacher I allow that such language would indeed be productive of but little comfort; for to the impotence of natural religion it must ever be a fearful thought, to think of being recompensed according to that merit which remains after the balance has been struck between our virtues and our crimes. Natural religion has therefore been compelled to break down the severity of the inquiry into sin, and by giving free scope to the operations of human infirmity, to abate the terrors of the judgment-day. But we that are in Christ, have no need thus to infringe upon justice, in order to make way for the interposition of mercy. We, too, have a hope of forgiveness and forbearance; but it is grounded, as it ought to be, not on some fanciful imagination of

the attributes of the judge, but upon the perfect fulfilment of the law, in all its strictness and in all its extent, by him who “was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” We read for our warning, and we lay it to heart for our improvement, that “it is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the Judgment.” But we stop not in our perusal of the Scriptures here. We pass on to the succeeding verse, and there read also and believe to our comfort, that, “*as* it is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment, *so* Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many,” and though we be sinners, yet to us “and to all them that look for him, shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” Here, and here alone, do we place the strength of our confidence and the repose of our souls, acknowledging, in all its extent, the goodness and wisdom of the Spirit that thus guided the Apostle in placing peace and righteousness so near together, and tempering the rigour of the justest judgment, with the mildness of a reasonable redemption and a plenteous mercy.

There remaineth, therefore, no more condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; and so to them that have tasted of this heavenly gift, it is a joyful sound to hear that they shall “receive the

things done in the body, whether they be good or bad," because they are verily confident in God, that the guilt of their evil things will be forgotten and forgiven, and the good they have meditated or performed, alone be remembered to their honour and their glory. With the same strictness, with the same impartiality, with the same fullness, with which the sins of the unredeemed will be scrutinized, with the same will the piety, and long-suffering, and patience, and meekness, and brotherly kindness and charity of the redeemed be rewarded; and in this there is no delusiveness of hope, no mockery of a promise, but the solid security of substantial bliss, to every one that will live godly in Christ. Each passing inclination to good, though abortive in act, from accident or infirmity; each pious thought, each holy word, each benevolent work, each mental prayer, each patient endurance of wrong, each wrathful feeling subdued, each temptation resisted, worldly affections mortified, sensual propensities not indulged, kindness felt or done, contented labour, honest poverty, and industrious greatness, shall all be recompensed according to each man's due. To every one this is a cheering view, but to the poor and to the mourner, and to the tempted, its consolation is beyond all praise. That affliction which for the present seemeth so grievous, that

poverty which now so narrows the benevolent exertions of the lowly in life, and those luxuries which make righteousness such a hard and constant act of self-denial to the wealthy, are soothed and gilded by the hope of the abundant greatness of their reward, and the Gospel becomes indeed glad tidings of salvation and of joy.

Hear ye then these terrors and these mercies of the Lord, these terrors to the wicked and these mercies to the redeemed. Hear of the heaviness of God's judgments upon the disobedient, of indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, the worm and the fire; and to-day, whilst it is called to-day, cast away the chains of sin and break the galling bonds of iniquity, that being justified in an accepted time, ye may be accepted in a joyful eternity. Hear of the multitude of God's mercies to the redeemed, and be not weary in your well-doing, knowing that, if ye faint not, ye shall in due season reap a glory not only beyond your merits, but beyond your understanding and your thoughts. Remember the infinite, yet mingled attributes of the Deity, and knowing that "God hath appointed a day, in the which we must *all* appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it

be good or bad," so strive to approve yourselves to the God of your salvation, that, being justified by his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit, you may reign with him for ever; and having your evil deeds blotted out, be rewarded for your good.

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